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STUDIES ON THE GOSPELS



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# STUDIES ON THE GOSPELS

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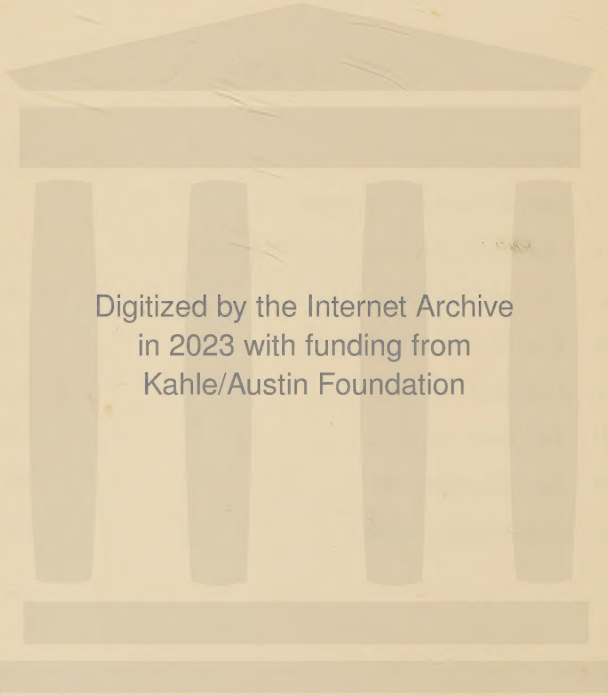
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## INTRODUCTION

AMONG those who have persevered in the aspiration towards a moral ideal there are but few who have never had any religious preoccupation, who have not, at one time or another, turned their eyes towards Jesus Christ.

Those who have the consciousness of having left Him are often willing enough to return in the hope of finding in Him satisfactions not to be found elsewhere, or consolation for the disappointments of life. A time, too, comes for the philosopher and student, when they can no longer lay aside the longing for something more than science can vouchsafe; the idea persists that a certitude lies hidden which no analysis can ever reveal. Thought, however concentrated; experience, however varied, leaves the question still unanswered: Has life a moral meaning? Is there anywhere a moral explanation? Is the goal to which nature is tending a refuge from doubt, a reward of uprightness, a compensation for sacrifice?

For men cannot abandon the idea of God; there is that in them which cannot but cling to the notion of a moral purpose guiding all things to a final solution, where each will find the satisfaction of needs, the

existence of which cannot be denied. The human personality cannot accept with equanimity the belief that it is to fade away and cease. In vain are men told that they have reached the highest plane of existence when at length they are able to appreciate to the full the horror of irreparable obliteration. Their intelligence must, and does, cling to the reality of possibilities which it perceives, possibilities summed up in the promise of contact with absolute truth, and that eternal. The longing which will not be denied is that this hope should become certitude. Is that possible? Grace and truth, it is said, were given by Jesus Christ; the only Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has made it known to the world. In order to know God, they are recommended to address themselves to the revealer of God, to Jesus Christ.

But how are they to proceed if they would act upon this advice? Through which of the channels proposed should they endeavour to reach the revealer of God? If they turn towards Protestantism, the mere spectacle of its multiform teaching produces bewilderment. If a choice be hazarded among its varied schools, the most recent development, with its enthusiasm and its equipment of learning, may seem to promise a clue rather than the orthodox forms. But the conclusion cannot long be deferred that the rationalistic Protestantism of the German universities is only natural religion in disguise. Its

God is probably, as Schérer<sup>1</sup> admits, man himself, man's perplexity and man's reason personified. As to the person of Christ, it is unhesitatingly stripped of its divine appanage. Not only are His supernatural attributes denied, but even His intuitions concerning God ; believe in Jesus, says liberal Protestantism, but do not believe *like* Him. What assistance can it offer, then, to one in quest of certitude, of faith? What is to be gained, after all, by adding metaphysical agnosticism to evangelical agnosticism?

Then if they turn to the Catholic Church, which evidently satisfies the spiritual needs of its adherents, and observe their practices, they seem to be disfigured by superstition. Jesus Christ seems to occupy an inadequate position in the Catholic cult. The Gospel is not the obvious norm of Catholic piety. The Catholic prayer is not addressed directly to the Father in heaven, and its apparent indirectness offends the superficial observer.

How, then, is Jesus Christ to be found? We are persuaded that for many men there is no possibility of belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ, in the attributes of the Church He founded, in the efficacy of His doctrine which it preserves, and the sacraments which confer His grace, until they have formed an integral conception of the man Himself. The supernatural is now a futile postulate. The trend of thought is towards the physical sources, and the intellect, which

<sup>1</sup> *Mélanges d'Histoire religieuses*, 1865, p. 244.



turns instinctively to the examination of texts and monuments and to the comparison of traditions, will not assent to any other method of inquiry as to the foundations of Christianity. It is to help such an investigation that the following chapters have been put together. Their purpose is to explain the names under which Jesus presented Himself, and to analyse the formulæ in which His revelation was conveyed.

When a man is drawn towards Jesus Christ it seems to us that the first movement must be that of one consciousness communicating with another. The divine in itself is unattainable. If the divinity has chosen to reveal itself, how is man to appreciate the revelation except by approaching the medium in which it is revealed? And since the medium is a human being, who imposed His personality without effort upon those who saw Him and heard Him, must we not also address ourselves to Him? At the end of the first century the author of the first gospel put the mission of John the Baptist in the forefront of his work. Addressing himself in his prologue to a circle of Johannites, to whom the words of their master were authoritative, he reminded them of the commission to bear witness to the Incarnation with which the Precursor had been entrusted, of the testimony which he had cried aloud on the banks of the Jordan. We are not Johannites, and this proof appeals with less force to us than does the testimony of the apostles who saw the Word made flesh.

It is as a living person that Jesus Christ presented

Himself to His contemporaries ; as such He created in His disciples faith in His divine origin and His mission as the Redeemer. He looked deeply into His own nature ; before formulating them for men, He defined to His own satisfaction the mysterious names in which He enveloped Himself. He is the "Son of God" ; this is the title which epitomises in a way the result of His psychological intuition. This title He claimed for Himself at all times and before all men. It was not the result of anxious thought, nor of a momentary exaltation in which He dreamed of formulating a doctrine which meant salvation for all : it was not the sequel to some notable action such as those in which a man, surpassing himself in the intensity of his devotion and his heroism, dares to believe himself touched by a superior force.

Jesus, in short, had not the spirit of God in a transitory way, like the prophets. To Him the divine gift was communicated without measure. It was not said of Him : On that day the spirit of God was upon Him. It is not said that such and such a word or action was spoken or performed in virtue of a special revelation. In the prayer which is formed in His heart when, during the night, He withdraws from the crowd to the lonely mountains, and is hidden even from His disciples, He does not pray for light, for He has received the light once for all. He has no special moments of supernatural inspiration ; it is permanently with Him, an organic principle, a vital element.

He knows only one origin, and that divine. The only paternity He recognises is that of God. Heaven is His home, His place, His native country. The divine sonship is His fundamental, and in a way unconditional, attribute, the solid rock on which He bases His mission as revealer, redeemer, Messiah. He is conscious, and the certitude was never shaken, of knowing God, not through the purification of human ideas, but as a son knows his father and penetrates to the intimate and secret mysteries of his will. He knows no human heredity; He has no memory of having derived His inspiration, His genius, if you will, from the prophets His predecessors. John the Baptist himself neither awakened nor influenced it; he recognised it, he pointed it out. Never did personality know itself, declare itself, so autonomous, so independent. Never was a man so little the product of his environment and of his time. That is the authentic Christ whom those disciples, who for three years were the daily witnesses of His life, sitting at table with Him, hearing Him speak, knew, preached and, we dare to say it, adored. That the first Christian generation inherited that faith ancient documents give testimony.

Modern critics who approach the problem of the living personality of Jesus with the conviction that He is only a man, that quite unknowingly He was shaped by His environment, regard those documents as incomplete. They attempt to supply what is wanting; to reconstruct the slow, progressive elaboration.



tion of His prophetic idea ; to retrace the natural road by which He must have arrived at the point of believing Himself to be the Messiah. Some are moved to seat themselves beside Renan on the ridge which, to the west, overlooks Nazareth, whence Jesus made the discovery of the world ; they must themselves look out upon what they style "the horizons of the prophet" ; they must contemplate the aspect of nature which charmed Him ; above all, they must turn their looks upon the sky, the immensity, the depth of which captivated and ravished the child's imagination, extended His dream to infinity, started the uninterrupted prayer to the divine chief, to the king and master of that heaven, to the heavenly Father, drawing Him mysteriously. Others, who work in their rooms, explain the origin of the Messianic consciousness by reconstructing the family scene. They bear in mind how fervent at that time were the aspirations towards the kingdom of God in the pious circle of the poor and humble. Elizabeth and Anna the prophetess, would be the fairy godmothers, who laid the first hopes in the cradle of the babe. Mary would have murmured to Him, alternately with words of tenderness, her holy presentiments that He might be the chosen of God, and her religious desire one day to see Him found the kingdom. Jesus would have been born, would have grown up, in the midst of dreams shaped by loved, respected parents. His beautiful nature (for He had, as they say, "the geniality of love") and the purity of

His heart called Him to adore God as a father, His Father. He felt Himself specially loved by Him. Did He not Himself point out the road by which to approach to God? "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." His faith in God is innate. "It did not spring from tempests of despair, as in the case of so many who have followed Him; it rested a radiant sun upon a vast and tranquil sea."<sup>1</sup>

It is curious to follow the growing interest taken by the critics in the adolescence of our Lord and His studies. We are informed what schools he frequented; His reading is examined; the prophecies which arrested His thought; the texts He would have preferred are conjectured, and choice extracts from Scripture are learnedly edited, on His behalf. John the Baptist appears, stirring the masses, creating a continually swelling stream of those who seek renovation through penance and baptism. The Messianic fever which tormented Israel reaches Jesus. Was it not he, the austere preacher of the kingdom of the heavens, who spoke in the name of God, whose faith was so robust, that implanted in the Nazarene of thirty, when he singled Him out in the baptism, the conviction that He should establish the kingdom? Forty days of retirement and meditation in solitude finished the work in which so many influences had collaborated. Jesus came out of the desert with the definite consciousness of being

<sup>1</sup> Holtzmann, *Lehrbuch*, i. p. 123.

the Christ, with a plan of Messianic redemption thought out.

The facts contradict this analysis of the antecedents of Jesus. The consciousness, the formation of which has been described by hypotheses so ingenious, is not the consciousness of the historical personage. He feels that He owes nothing to His predecessors, as we have said. He claims but one heredity, and that divine. Is it not casting one more doubt upon His sincerity, His loyalty? Is it not branding Him as an unscrupulous man, the most obstinate, the most dangerous, history has ever known?

However intense be the religious exaltation of a man, he comes to himself at one time or another. Contact with reality will recall him, who has usurped a title, a character, to a humbler frame of mind; it will damp his enthusiasm and open his eyes. But Jesus never doubted Himself, his Messianic call, His divine sonship. The failure of His ministry, the dulness, the vulgarity of His followers, the malice of the religious and political authorities, the pre-science of a horrible death, did not perturb Him. If, after His baptism, He was tempted, the temptation was not directed against the dignity of the Christ; He met it on the ground of the Messianic program, on the means to which He would have recourse to establish the kingdom of His Father. He bore the title of Son of God without bending under the weight of so grave an attribute, in no way

inferior to His undertaking. Is not this without parallel, a thing unique in history?

Critics who exclude from the personality of Jesus every supernatural element misunderstand and travesty Him completely; since He Himself alone claims for Himself His divine character. We often ask ourselves how men who have preserved the religion of Jesus, who owe to Him life-giving certitudes, who, in the hour of doubt and temptation, turn to Him for light and moral support, who venerate in Him a sacred personality, can possibly fail to understand how they destroy Him when they suspect His sincerity, representing Him as a visionary, the victim of the most monstrous illusions.

This was the reproach, indeed, which many irreligious writers addressed to Renan the moment his *Vie de Jésus* was published. They blamed him for the concessions he made to orthodoxy, and ridiculed his conclusions. They judged, and rightly, that the historian had one object in view, to strip the Nazarene prophet of His supernatural attributes and wring from Him the surrender of His divine claims. But the man was recompensed for His abdication by such homage as lifted Him from this world and placed Him in the sphere of the ideal; He was accorded a place apart among religious personalities and moral benefactors. It was said of Him "that to remove His name from this world would be to shake it to its foundations," that "that name was the synonym of religion." An incompar-

able genius by His intuition of the everlasting needs of humanity ; a stranger to every egotistical quest and vulgar preoccupation ; humble, gentle, compassionate to the victims of society, to sinners ; the blessed martyr of a holy cause, of emancipation from hypocritical and sectarian fanaticism, He delivered the idea of God from the material forms which disfigured it, substituting the adoration of the spirit for the rite upon the mountain, the rite of blood. If this be Jesus, they concluded, why not listen to Him ? Ideal for ideal, the older is preferable. The reproach was well founded ; it is a serious reproach, and one to which it is not easy to reply.

Undoubtedly no one will ever exalt this man too much. But, in the name of justice, let Him not be refused the elementary attribute to which the least of us has a right, sincerity and loyalty. How can those critics not see that the more they exalt the man in Jesus Christ the more they strengthen the testimony He gave of Himself touching His celestial origin, His divine sonship ?

All He is, His vast exigencies which no man will ever dare emulate, the certitude of His revelation, the efficaciousness of His salvation, His pretension of being alone and unique among the envoys of God, depend upon that title, spring from that consciousness. His Messianic character is only a part, the Jewish field, of the vaster domain of His appanage as the Son of God. Thus was He known and under-



stood by the first Christian generation, whose faith St. Paul has transmitted to us.

After eighteen centuries that man reappears before us with the same exigencies ; and they are absolute. We meet Him at the cross-roads which lead to God, upon which almost all of us have embarked in order to come to the Creator. We find Him there inevitably, the accredited custodian of the highways to the divine world, the authorised guide to the bridle paths and passes, which without Him are not to be explored. All come to Him, all must make up their minds in respect of Him : the philosopher, who would inquire of the first cause, who would fix the laws which rule the world of intellects ; the historian, whom documents transport into the presence of a man situated in space and time, who declared Himself the envoy of God, the Son of God ; the moralist, who sooner or later perceives that the rules of uprightness and justice have been taken and absorbed by the Sermon on the Mount, that they have been inscribed upon a supernatural tablet, whence they can no longer be detached, that they have received a divine, an immutable impress, which gives them certitude and all their value ; the sociologist, whose dream it is to vouchsafe true happiness to the simple and the poor, to those who must work each day for each day's bread, who ends with the conviction that the tried and efficacious formulæ were uttered by Him—and that there is another hunger, other than that for bread.

For these we have described a few circumstances of the life of the God-Man, isolating a chapter or two of His revelation. May they understand that, according to the words spoken by St. Peter in the first days of the Christian preaching, there is no salvation except through Him.<sup>1</sup> "There is no salvation in any other; for neither is there any other name given under heaven to men, whereby we may be saved."

<sup>1</sup> Acts iv. 12.



# STUDIES ON THE GOSPELS

## I

### THE FOURFOLD GOSPEL

THE reader is doubtless aware of the theories in regard to the Canon of the New Testament held in the advanced schools of biblical criticism. It is suggested that gradually and by slow stages, first the *logia* and then the epistles and gospels were raised to the dignity of Holy Scripture, and found a place side by side with the law and the prophets as inspired books having canonical authority. The process, it is said, took about a hundred years, from the end of the apostolic age to the middle of the second century. In the time of the apostles and the first Christians the sacred writings were limited, we are told, to the books of the Old Testament; and we are assured that if we consult the Fathers of an earlier date than, say, 140, we shall find that the writings of the apostles were not yet looked upon as inspired, nor placed on an equal footing with the

books of the Old Testament. The *logia* of our Lord, separate from the evangelical narrative and unmodified, that is, not having yet passed through the mind of any editor, and so free from the setting in which we know them, were alone authoritative in the earliest days of Christianity. It is only in the Clementine Homilies that at length we find a fragment of the gospel mentioned as Scripture.

How and why were the writings of the apostles—the gospels and epistles—raised to the same dignity as the law and the prophets? It was, we are told, under the influence of the great heretical movements which modified the conditions of the Church's life, and favoured the development of new dogmas, that the Canon of the New Testament was constituted; first, as to its specific character; and then, little by little, as to its contents. Marcion was the first, says Harnack,<sup>1</sup> to base his theology on the writings of the apostles. By rejecting the Old Testament, he deprived himself of all scriptural support, so that he had of necessity to form a new Canon, to which he attributed the same high prestige as was commonly given to the old. The way once pointed out, the example of Marcion and other accidental causes, which it would take too long to enumerate, led the Church to make a new Canon, not in opposition to the old, as the heretic had done, but on an equality with it. The collection of four gospels occupies an important and special place in the history of that

<sup>1</sup> *History of Dogma*, vol. i.



Canon, for its purpose was very different from that of the epistles and other writings. Harnack has lately<sup>1</sup> told this special history, and has attempted to show, not so much how the collection of the four gospels came to be recognised as Scripture, as how it came to form one collection, and to be circulated throughout the Church. It will be well to explain Harnack's arguments at some length, and to submit them to a critical examination, for they seem to call for much criticism.

## I

"People have grown so accustomed for seventeen centuries to accept the fact that the Church possesses four gospels of equal value that not even the most thoughtful have given the subject a moment's consideration; yet this fact is one of the strangest of paradoxes, whether we regard it in itself or in the light of ancient history." This is how Harnack introduces the question he sets himself to solve, and which he proposes to exhibit in its true light, after it has been neglected for almost two thousand years. The churches of the Empire were each formed by the apostles who were their founders, and by the traditions they left behind. They were joined together as units in a confederation, rather than organised into one hierarchical body, and each church had its separate and autonomous existence. Each

<sup>1</sup> *Geschichte des altchristl. Litteratur*, II. i. 681, etc.

read its own gospel, an indigenous gospel, so to speak, and drew from it the spiritual nourishment which kept its faith alive. The old Christian communities of Palestine had but one gospel. It was the same with the Christians of Syria, for we can no longer hold the hypothesis of a diatessaron in use among them. The churches of Egypt, in all likelihood, and the Christians of Jewish origin, who were numerous in that country, read a Greek translation of an Aramaic gospel which had come to them from Palestine. Harnack treats it as certain that the custom of reading the four gospels began in one of the churches and then spread to the others. The contrary, he says, would have been a literary miracle. The determination of the precise number four must have been evolved, not without contention, though it is no longer in our power to trace the evolution. Not only the plurality of gospels, but the special and curious titles with which they have come down to us, bear witness to an original order of things, which quickly passed away. The word *κατά*, says Harnack, used with the name of an apostle, contains a charming piece of history for whoever wishes to decipher it. The archaic titles *καθ' Ἑβραίων*, *κατ' Αἰγυπτίων* indicate the country of origin and the readers of the gospel. The name of an apostle was substituted for the name of country or people, and the gospels, recommended by these new titles, ousted the old territorial gospels. Thus it is that Harnack, following the clue which he

discovers in the number four, and in the transformation the gospels bearing the above titles underwent, endeavours to discover the country where the fourfold division originated.

If it is impossible to determine how, when, and in what church the synoptics came to be grouped together, this is not, however, the case as regards the composition of the fourfold gospel. At least, Harnack does not shrink from the undertaking, and the following is a brief abstract of his investigation. His method is known; he begins by surveying his subject matter generally, and determining as many certain points as possible; and it is only after he has thus fixed his data, and made sure of the stages through which the development has passed, that he addresses himself directly to his problem.

The end of the second century is the first of these stages. We know from Hippolytus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and the discussion of the Paschal question, that the canon of the gospels was at that time definitely constituted; that the four gospels were everywhere recognised; and that at Rome, throughout North Africa, in Egypt, in Gaul, and in Asia Minor they had exclusive authority. From the enthusiastic tone in which Irenæus speaks of them, and of the necessity of the number four, we are safe in concluding that the collection was already formed in his day; that he was not the author of it; that it had not been made within his memory; and that consequently as early as the year 155 it existed

in the churches of Asia. Having gone thus far, Harnack endeavours to point out another set of data. He considers he has found a secure position in the Clementine Homilies, which, according to a theory of his own, are the work of Pope St. Soter (166). This pope, then, must have read the *Gospel according to the Egyptians*; he must have taken from it the well-known *logia*, and among the rest, the dialogue between Salome and our Lord.<sup>1</sup> To Pope Soter, therefore, argues Harnack, the fourfold gospel had not yet an exclusive value. The same must be concluded of St. Justin, who makes use of the *Gospel of Peter*. If we pass to Egypt we shall find that Clement shows unmistakable dependence on the apocryphal books; he seems to speak of the four gospels as if they had but recently taken their position. It was not so very long before this that the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* had been publicly read, and the people were familiar with its fantastic *logia*. Clement and Origen quote them, and use them as if they were classical passages familiar to all the faithful.<sup>2</sup> Nor was it otherwise with the *Gospel according to the Egyptians*. These two territorial gospels, which had so long had the honour of being publicly read, had only just been dispossessed by the fourfold gospel. The modest titles of the gospels—‘*according to the Hebrews*’; ‘*according to the Egyptians*’—could not long compete with writings

<sup>1</sup> Chapter xii.

<sup>2</sup> Clem., *Strom.*, ii. 9, 45. Origen, *In Joann.* II.

which bore the names of apostles, or were guaranteed by their authority. Apparently the introduction of the four gospels need not be dated further back than thirty years previously, and it is probable that during the great struggle with the Gnostics, between 140 and 175, thanks to the general confusion of the times, the four gospels had stolen a successful march and succeeded in establishing themselves in all the churches. We have no means of knowing the condition of the Greek communities of Antioch. The work of Theophilus, the diatessaron and commentary, suddenly disappeared—a matter not easily explained. Nevertheless, at Rhossus in the year 206 the *Gospel of Peter*<sup>1</sup> was publicly read at divine service.

The four gospels, therefore, were not formed into one collection at Rome ; nor in Egypt ; nor in Syria. Where, then? In Asia,<sup>2</sup> is Harnack's answer. Irenæus, who was the first to proclaim the canon of the four gospels, takes us back to the traditions of the churches of Asia in the year 155. We can even go back still further, says the learned critic, and find traces of a rivalry between the synoptics and the fourth gospel, which ended in a species of compromise.

Harnack next explains what, in his opinion, must have been the conditions under which the fourfold gospel came into existence. It was constituted by the juxtaposition and admission of the gospel of St. John

<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, *Church History*, vi. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Might not Harnack have found the first hint of his theory in the *Acta Timothei*?



upon the same footing as the synoptics. Now this recognition for the fourth gospel of a religious and historical character similar to that of the synoptics must have been slow in coming ; and if we accept as a specimen what Papias tells us on the subject of the gospel of St. Mark, it was not accomplished without a struggle. In the churches of Asia, enriched through the apostolate of St. Paul, the years of Timothy's episcopate, and the venerable old age of St. John, the fourth gospel alone was read. The discourses of Jesus, recalled and meditated upon by the evangelist in the light of his long religious experience, and made fruitful through the christological teaching of St. Paul, were formed into that gospel. The gospel of St. Mark penetrated into this Asiatic society. It was criticised ; it was subjected to a comparative examination which was not to its advantage ; doubts were raised as to whether it had an apostle's sanction and faithfully reproduced St. Peter's teaching. No one knew how it had come to be written : many hesitated to receive it. The Presbyter John<sup>1</sup> was obliged to take up its defence, as we conclude from his apologetic tone. Mark may not have given the true order of events, says the Presbyter, but his accounts bear the stamp of accuracy ; his is a faithful record. Peter, whose disciple Mark was, had given his instructions according to the needs of his hearers, troubling little about the order of our Lord's discourses. Mark did the best he could in writing them

<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, *Church History*, iii. 39.

down as he heard them. He had one only object in view : to tell all he heard with strict truthfulness.<sup>1</sup> The Presbyterian John then absolves the author of the second gospel from all voluntary subjective error, though the contents of his gospel seems to him imperfect. Harnack was the first to discover the full significance of this ancient passage, the importance of which had partially escaped critics who were busy-ing themselves more with the Presbyterian's testimony regarding St. Matthew. This was a valuable discovery, of which Harnack has not neglected to make use.

The first gospel seems to have been received without discussion, thanks to its claim to apostolic origin. But Harnack declares that the two first gospels, however highly accredited, were far from gaining the extraordinary credit which John's gospel continued to enjoy. For the fourfold gospel to be constituted, it was requisite that the equal authority of all should be admitted in some way or other. Opportunely the attacks delivered by the Alogi, in the name of the synoptics, diminished the prestige of St. John's gospel. It was held largely responsible for the Montanist movement and the ruin of the churches of Phrygia and Asia. Still there was no absolute wish to exclude this gospel altogether ; a compromise was effected, the result of which was the formation of the fourfold gospel.

Have we not here, asks Harnack, proud of his

<sup>1</sup> ὥστε οὐδὲν ἡμαρτε Μάρκος, οὕτως ἐνία γράφας ὡς ἀπεμνημόνευσεν.

discovery, the true story of the formation of the fourfold gospel? Can we possibly penetrate more deeply into its origin? This formation of the collection of the gospels took place between 120 and 140. It could not well have been earlier, and it could not well have been later. The collection did not yet enjoy the dignity of canonical Scripture, and it was not yet to have universal exclusive authority. These two privileges would come with time, during the course of the second century, when it had succeeded in suppressing the old indigenous gospels and in casting suspicion upon them.

Summed up as briefly and as faithfully as possible, these are the views of Harnack on the formation of the canon of the gospels.

## II

It is for us to verify the premises on which these conclusions rest, and to test the accuracy of the details, especially as regards the reading of the gospels in the different churches. We must then inquire whether our author has not made too much of mere trifles; if he has not magnified the suggestions of history which he has used; if, in the vast area of his investigation, he has not overlooked evidence sufficiently weighty to weaken the force of his conclusions and even to modify them; and whether, after all, the attacks of the Alogi could

possibly have been so important a factor in the formation of the fourfold gospel.

Each church read its own gospel: this was practically the universal law; and some of these gospels, which succeeding ages have disregarded as apocryphal, have perished. This is the first link in Harnack's chain of argument. Now this would only be possible on the supposition that there was no intercourse among the churches in matters of doctrine and general edification, leaving aside any hierarchical relation. If, however, we are not forbidden to use the evidence of the apostolic age itself, we must conclude that continuous intercourse kept the different Christian communities closely united with one another. We speak more particularly of the churches on the seaboard, which enjoyed an organised system of maritime intercommunication, and of the central churches situated on the rivers and great Roman highways. The intensity of the life of these communities which the *Didache* reveals to us; the activity displayed by the prophets and apostolic missionaries who, following the example of St. Paul, were continually visiting the churches, to such an extent as to become an embarrassment, make it abundantly clear that the isolation of which Harnack speaks did not exist. The principle which would have preserved those primitive communities from isolation, had there been any need, and which was almost at once to group them together, had been laid down by St. Paul. That principle contained

in germ their immediate hierarchical unification, their future Catholicity. In his first epistle to the Corinthians the apostle includes them all as members of one great organism; all the brethren are saints; they make but one body with Christ as their Head; as members of this one body they are essentially united to Christ, essentially united among themselves. The fact, too, that St. Ignatius, though merely Bishop of Antioch, salutes all the churches which he meets in his long journey, knows all their traditions, and exhorts them to preserve the unity of the faith, shows us how fruitful had been the apostle's words.

In order to test the first of Harnack's data, it will even suffice to determine the geographical area in which the synoptics were received down to the year 140, the date assigned by him to the first established position of the fourfold gospel; and to follow the parallel progress of the gospel of St. John, which was read everywhere simultaneously with the others.

If the synoptics are dependent on one another (whatever the nature of that dependence may be), we must conclude that by the year 80, which is the latest date we can assign to St. Luke's work, Matthew's gospel and Mark's gospel had passed beyond the limits of the countries where they were written, and were already in circulation in Antioch. We have no wish to insist on this point, preferring to gather up the traces<sup>1</sup> of the synoptics found in

<sup>1</sup> We follow Bernard Weiss, whose radical tendencies as regards the history of the Canon are well known, whose authority, therefore,



the writings of the Fathers previous to the year 140. It is certain that the gospel of St. Matthew was known at Rome towards the close of the first century. St. Clement, to wit, quotes a number of *logia* in the characteristic phrases of the first gospel.<sup>1</sup> It circulated in Egypt also by the beginning of the second century; for the author of the *Epistle of Barnabas*<sup>2</sup> apparently makes use of it. We know from the Presbyter John, who had read fragmentary translations of it,<sup>3</sup> that it had been received, and warmly received, in Asia, a domain jealously sacred to the Johannine traditions. The gospel of St. Luke reached Rome probably soon after it was written; we do not think it safe to deny, like Weiss, that several of the *logia* quoted by Clement<sup>4</sup> may have been from this gospel. It was certainly read in Egypt, since the *Epistle of Barnabas*<sup>5</sup> owes much to it. The form of the *logia* found in the *Didache* is a witness to the presence of this gospel among the communities of Palestine and Syria.<sup>6</sup> We deduce no argument from the quotations to be found in the Clementine Homilies,

is above suspicion (*Lehrbuch der Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, Berlin, 1897). We have also consulted with much advantage Loisy's *Histoire du Canon du Nouveau Testament*, 1891.

<sup>1</sup> 10 Clem. 13; Matt. v. 7 and vi. 14. 1 Clem. 46, 8; Matt. xxvi. 24 and xviii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> iv. 14; Matt. xxvii. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Eusebius, *Church History*, iii. 39.

<sup>4</sup> xiii.; Luke vi. 38, etc.

<sup>5</sup> v. 9; Luke xvi. 11, etc.

<sup>6</sup> i.; Luke vi. 28-32; xv.; Luke vii. 35, etc.

because the date and authorship of this work are called in question.

So far as we can judge, St. Mark's gospel did not enjoy so wide a circulation. We cannot say with certainty that St. Ignatius<sup>1</sup> quotes it. In any case, it reached Asia towards the close of the first century, and was the occasion of the conflict of which Papias speaks. Thus at the beginning of the second century gospels written by the apostles, or guaranteed by them, were certainly being read in Asia, at Rome, at Antioch, in Palestine, and at Alexandria. These were gospels, too, of which the catholicity, in the strictest sense of the word, cannot be denied. So rapid a diffusion seems to us a matter of considerable importance, especially as we cannot determine how early it began; and we may well ask what authority local gospels, even supposing they did exist, like the *gospel of Peter*, the *gospels according to the Hebrews*, and the *Egyptians*, with their grotesque conceits, could have had side by side with the synoptics. This is a question Harnack does not consider, and we have reason to ask why he has not done so.

The fourth gospel spread step by step with the synoptics. They are found together in the principal churches, and as far as is seen, without coming into conflict; even the miniature storm against St. John in Asia did not spread elsewhere. The letters of

<sup>1</sup> Eph. xvi. 2.

St. Ignatius,<sup>1</sup> the Epistle of Barnabas, the *Didache*, the *Shepherd* of Hermas, enable us to trace the steady spread of the fourth gospel among the various churches. None of these writings are later than the year 140. Harnack's theory is that this gospel was not written earlier than 110, if as early. If this be so, we can only marvel that its acceptance was so prompt, not to say instantaneous, and that it should have been accepted without a word of protest. For St. Ignatius<sup>2</sup> had had time to assimilate it completely, as his letters abundantly show. But Antioch, we know, was the home of the early oral catecheses; there they were formed and fixed from

<sup>1</sup> We do not wish to discuss the date of these writings. At any rate, Harnack has not proved the derivation of the *Didache* from Barnabas. All critics agree to reject the theory which would establish a resemblance between the Clementine Homilies and the Epistle of Pope St. Soter.

<sup>2</sup> The Son of God is called by St. Ignatius αὐτοῦ λόγος . . . ὃς κατὰ πάντα εὐηρέστησεν τῷ πέμψαντι αὐτόν. (Cf. *Ad Magnesios*, viii. 2, and John i. 1; viii. 29.) He was πρὸ αἰώνων παρὰ πατρί. (Cf. *Ad Magnesios*, vi. 1, and John i. 2; xvii. 5.) His incarnation is formulated in the style of St. John: ἐν σαρκὶ γενόμενος Θεὸς, ἐν θανάτῳ ζωὴ ἀληθινή. (*Ad Ephesios*, vii. 2.) The Eucharist is described as in the fourth gospel, σὰρξ Ἰησοῦ. Χρ. ἄρτος. His blood is a πόμα (*Ad Romanos*, vii. 3), and so on. Most critics judge, and rightly, that St. Ignatius had read the fourth gospel. E. von der Goltz (*Ignatius von Antiochien als Christ und Theologe. Texte und Untersuchungen*, 1894) does not think that direct dependence is requisite to explain the ideas and formulas which are common to the fourth gospel and the Bishop of Antioch. Yet he does not attempt to deny the connection. This is so close, he says, that we must admit a direct historic and local relationship (page 174). Any theory which seeks to explain such relationship, while denying the prevalence of the fourth gospel at Antioch, seems to us improbable, and lacking in historical fidelity.

the time of the first coming of the apostles and the foundation of that church ; consequently the influence of the synoptics held its sway there from the beginning. Yet in St. Ignatius we find that that influence is shared with the Johannine. Though of Asiatic origin, the fourth gospel was read with the other three in the fastidious Greek churches, and that from the first or second decade of the second century. If the fourfold gospel had its origin in Asia, are we not justified in attributing to it *another origin* in the great Syrian church ?

The neighbouring church of Palestine, to which probably we owe the *Didache*, also read this gospel. It had long found credit there, without in any way prejudicing the synoptic tradition. The Eucharistic prayers of the *Didache* are, to use the expression of Weiss, *saturated* with the thought and spirit of St. John. The natural inference is that the author of these liturgical formulæ knew the gospel itself and was not using mere oral traditions of its teaching, since he quotes the personal reflections of the evangelist.<sup>1</sup>

If Antioch received, so to speak, the first edition of

<sup>1</sup> The direct dependence of the *Didache* upon the fourth gospel is not, however, allowed by all. Several of the best critics, like Funk, reserve their judgment. There is, nevertheless, a close resemblance in many characteristic passages as regards both doctrine and language. Chapters ix. and x. have a special interest. The Eucharist is there described, not in the formulæ of the synoptics and St. Paul, but in terms similar to those of the fourth gospel. It is extolled as spiritual meat and drink, the food of the life eternal. We remark especially the resemblance between St. John xi. 51 and 52 and the *Didache* ix. 4.

St. John's gospel, if some years later it was in use in Palestine, Alexandria could not well refuse it entrance to its churches and its schools. Leaving aside the testimony which the heretics have left us, it is sufficient for us to observe that the Epistle of Barnabas was influenced alike by the synoptics and by the fourth gospel. No one now denies that this Alexandrian work is impregnated with the Johannine spirit.<sup>1</sup>

The fourth gospel reached Rome before the year 140. It had been read by the Shepherd of Hermas,<sup>2</sup> the last person in the world to be influenced by novelties; it was a new stimulus to the exhausted imagination of the aged writer, suggesting to his mind a well-developed system of christology. Such was the progress of the fourth gospel. Though authorities are few, and we cannot be precise in the matter of dates, we have still been able to reconstruct the course of its diffusion, to fix the principal among the seaboard churches where it became known.

<sup>1</sup> Barnabas, ἐλθεῖν ἐν σαρκί; 1 John iv. 2, κατοικεῖν ἐν ἡμῖν (vi. 14); John i. 14. The brazen serpent xii. 5; John iii. 14; xxi. 1; John xii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> We consider that the connection between the *Shepherd* of Hermas and the fourth gospel is unquestionable. Scholars of eminence, like Holtzman and Weiss, admit this; and whoever is familiar with the two works cannot fail to recognise that the language and ideas of the Apostle are reproduced in the work of the old Roman writer. The Son of God is called πύλη (*Sim.* ix. 12, 2); see John x. 9 (*Sim.* ix. 12, 5), εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἄλλως εἰσελθεῖν οὐ δύναται ἄνθρωπος; see John iii. 5 and First Epistle iii. 23; *Sim.* ix. 12, 6 and John x. 18; 1 Epistle i. 7, 9.

These facts, which Harnack has chosen to neglect, have a very important bearing on what he calls the pre-history of the fourfold gospel. His picture then of the primitive churches, each with its one indigenous gospel, is to be accepted only with abundant reservations. To us it seems hopelessly unhistoric as regards the early years of the second century. Besides, can we possibly imagine that, say, the *Gospel according to the Egyptians* could have remained the only gospel of the Christians of Alexandria down to the middle of that century? How could it maintain its supremacy, if such it ever had, in the presence of the gospel of St. Luke and the gospel of St. John? In the next place, the dispute in Asia is of no conclusive value in determining the origin of the fourfold gospel, if we admit its rapid, extended, and unobstructed circulation immediately upon its composition. The fact that this dispute found no echo in other churches, the fact that the gospel of John was received at once and without resistance in places where the faith had long been nourished on the traditions of the synoptics, seem of much greater interest and more worthy of notice by the historian than the petty dispute about St. Mark's gospel, which we learn of from Papias. This dispute certainly has not the importance given to it. If the student desires to know why this is so, he should note that the discussion was restricted to St. Mark; St. Matthew's gospel was never called in question. And why? Because it was but natural to examine and collate an



unknown gospel, which was the work of a disciple who was all but unknown in the churches of Asia, and doubts might be entertained as to its apostolic approbation.

## III

The fourfold gospel was formed, first by the grouping of the synoptics which, in virtue of direct or indirect apostolic origin, enjoyed authority from the earliest times; and then by the contact of the Johannine tradition with that of the synoptics and their ultimate fusion. We have clearly shown that the gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, widely spread from the last quarter of the first century, *had taken a position* in the different churches as possessing the supreme prerogative of apostolic works. What then, it may be asked, was the place or value of the gospels *of the Egyptians, of the Hebrews, and of St. Peter?* It can be shown that these apocryphal gospels do not possess the marks of primitive writings. They were born and they flourished with the Alexandrine and Syrian heresies; they had authority chiefly among the heretics, although the orthodox churches made use of them as historical documents, and occasionally borrowed one or other of their *logia*.

{ The *Gospel according to the Hebrews* has a special value for the history of the fourfold gospel. It is a very ancient writing, and undoubtedly it had considerable authority in several communities. It is still

an ἀντιλεγόμενον in the eyes of Eusebius, and we know the weight of this qualificative as used by him. We gather from him that it was accepted and read in certain churches as Holy Scripture, or at least was held to have the same claim as the canonical gospels to be so considered; but the greater number of churches having either never heard of it or having rejected it, it was doomed to disappear. At some time then it had some authority in certain orthodox Christian communities, which considered it an authentic source of the *logia* and miracles of Jesus. It was, we are told, the victim of the fourfold gospel, and wrongly despoiled of its authority; this is a difficulty we are invited to solve.

We admit, to begin with, that the case of this gospel differs essentially from that of the *Gospel according to the Egyptians* and the *Gospel of St. Peter*; it stands apart. In order to give an opinion about it and so reduce the difficulty urged by the critics to its true value, we must determine its origin and examine its contents; the grounds of our conclusions must of necessity be stated briefly, so as not to prolong this discussion beyond reasonable limits.

Is this gospel independent of the synoptics? Has it a real individuality? Or, on the other hand, is it a derivative from St. Matthew, either as a translation or a targum? This is the first problem, and at once we find ourselves at variance with the best critics, Harnack and Zahn. These agree in pronouncing that the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* cannot be

derived from the canonical text of St. Matthew, that it was not written and remodelled after this text. Harnack considers the argument of Zahn on this point conclusive; but the two critics at once differ as to possible relationship between the apocryphal gospel and the primitive text of St. Matthew. Harnack affirms that the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* is absolutely independent of it; that it is of equal importance with the gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke, and that as regards the history and the *logia* of our Lord, it holds precisely the same position and place in respect to the forms traditionally adopted. It may have been written between the year 65 and the year 100. Zahn, on the other hand, holds that it is closely dependent upon a Hebrew version of St. Matthew, and that it would be in this similar to the canonical text of St. Matthew even to the point of being a duplicate. These two points of view are flatly opposed one to the other. What has led Harnack to differ thus from his colleague? For Zahn's theory to be well founded, Harnack says that (1) the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* should contain the first two chapters relative to the supernatural conception; (2) all St. Matthew's quotations should be found in the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*; (3) we ought to be able to interpret the silence of Jerome as evidence in favour of the essential identity of the two gospels. Lastly, he adds as an objection to the "duplicate" hypothesis that the stichometry of Nicephorus gives 2,200 lines to the Hebrew Gospel

and 2,500 to Matthew. These seem very exacting conditions. Observe, on the contrary, that all the ecclesiastical writers, however little in accord on many points, agree in recognising relationship between the Hebrew gospel and St. Matthew; it has even been confused with the original of St. Matthew, and the "ut plerique autumant" of Jerome is very significant.<sup>1</sup> The same author, who had read it, and who apparently translated it, imagined for a long time that he had in his hands the Semitic text of the first gospel. He has taken the trouble to note the characteristic variants, and the result of his careful collation is a very small number of such variants, and those only of secondary interest. We do not wish to attach too great importance to this argument, but it has an undoubted value.

The other difficulties which Harnack opposes to Zahn's theory rest on the assumed identity in all respects of the canonical text and the original text of St. Matthew's gospel. The stichometry of Nicephorus offers no difficulty unless we assume that the translation cannot have taken up a longer or shorter space than the original, though Harnack does not appear

<sup>1</sup> We are surprised to find Bernard Weiss saying (*Einleitung*, 45, 5) that Clement and Origen consider the Hebrew Gospel independent of St. Matthew, and deny any relationship whatever between the two writings. This is an unwarrantable exaggeration of the sense of the three words introducing a quotation from this gospel. Nor do we understand why the silence of the Alexandrians should throw more light on its nature and composition than Jerome's numerous notes and his "plerique autumant."

to observe this. He must admit that the Greek canonical text was retouched and extended ; and that in consequence the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* could easily depend upon the original of St. Matthew, and have at the same time a different stichometry from the Greek text which we possess. For our own part, since we admit the practical identity of the Greek version and the Hebrew text of the first gospel, we are bound to reply to the proposed difficulties.

Harnack questions whether there was any account of the supernatural conception in the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*. This suggestion surprises us, since the Nazarenes admitted the supernatural conception. They read no other gospel, and were only acquainted with the life of Jesus in this document. It would certainly be astonishing that they should have been obliged to go to oral tradition to learn the mystery of the birth of the Lord, and not to have found it in their own biography of Him. As to the other impossibilities put forward by Harnack, they are all based on the stichometry of Nicephorus. Why should unbounded reliance be placed in this stichometry, when, as Zahn has shown, it contains numerous mistakes on even ancient matters. Moreover, this stichometry is far from agreeing at all times with others which exist. We are therefore of opinion that those who deny the dependence of the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* upon the primitive text of St. Matthew have not given sufficient reasons for their

theory. On the other hand Zahn, who maintains that there is a close relationship between the two writings, seems to us to have given solid and cogent arguments in support of his view.

If the *Gospel of the Nazarenes* depends on St. Matthew, if there is near relationship between them, if this gospel is a double of our canonical text, why was it not admitted into the Canon? Why was it deprived of its old position while the other received all credit and honour? To give a satisfactory answer to this fundamental question we must first examine its contents; compare it with the first gospel; decide which is primitive and which has been retouched, worked up again, and consequently disfigured. We find ourselves in the midst of conflicting opinions as to the antiquity of this or that particular *logion*; but we feel justified in saying in a general way that the criticisms and conclusions of Resch seem irresistible; namely, that the *Gospel of the Hebrews* has none of the primitive simplicity of the text of St. Matthew, that it has been disfigured, annotated in a sense favourable to Judaism, and that it borders at times on the extravagant, not to say on the grotesque.

Let us now examine some of the more characteristic of these *logia*. The first refers to the baptism of Jesus.<sup>1</sup> We are shown a little family altercation, in

<sup>1</sup> Ecce mater Domini et fratres ejus dicebant ei: "Joannes Baptista baptizat in remissionem peccatorum; eamus et baptizemur ab eo." Dixit autem eis: "Quid peccavi ut vadam et baptizer ab eo? nisi forte hoc ipsum, quod dixi, ignorantia est."



which the mother and brothers importune Him to go and confess His sins ; they for their part are going, and they want Him to go too. Jesus begs them to excuse Him on the ground that He is conscious of no sin. Nevertheless in the end He consents out of humility, saying that He might have sinned without knowing it. We are all familiar with the incident as recorded by St. Matthew. John refuses to baptise Him, and Jesus answers that John in baptising, and Himself in being baptised, are alike doing the will of God. Harnack maintains the greater antiquity of the text found in the *Gospel of the Hebrews*. Here, he says, we have a circumstance which, later, is suppressed, which cannot be an addition, from the suggestion it contains of the ignorance of Jesus regarding His innocence. It seems to us, on the contrary, that the version which presents Jesus in the attitude of deeper humility is that of the canonical text. Jesus, in presenting Himself for baptism "unto remission of sins," entirely of His own accord, in saying to John that He is come to fulfil all justice, might appear to simple readers as a sinner really aware of His shortcomings. In the *Hebrew gospel*, on the other hand, the thought of a baptism common to Himself and the rest of the world does not enter His head ; He has no need whatever of this baptism, for He cannot remember ever having sinned ; nevertheless, humble and docile, He accompanies His mother and brethren, covering Himself with a pretext

of possible ignorance. The person who rehandled this *logion* seems to wish to explain why Jesus received the baptism of penance. It is easily understood that some Christians may have supposed that Jesus had sinned before His baptism and consecration as the Messiah; the object of the corrector in that case would be to react against such an idea. According to the three synoptics, Jesus presents Himself of His own accord to the Baptist; He plunges into the river, and as He comes out of it, the voice of the Father is heard consecrating and blessing Him. In the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* the episode has a totally different complexion. There Jesus goes to the baptism against His will, out of mere complacency towards others, so that the great Messianic manifestation appears in the light of a chance, dependent on the importunities of the mother and the brethren. Then the episode of the baptism is no longer in harmony with the episode of the celestial vision, and the discord is aggravated by the hyperbolic words attributed to the voice from heaven. The two events seem to have been reconstructed by an author who had not the skill to harmonise them, and who, by exaggerating the contrasts, quite destroys the connection which in the synoptics is simplicity itself.

We think we have shown that the declaration of Jesus refusing baptism has been worked up into the narrative. This conclusion is further borne out by

the fact that the *logion* which follows it,<sup>1</sup> and which has decidedly some connection with the declaration, is, as all agree, less primitive and a manifest amplification. Jesus, it is pointed out, now receives the fulness of the Holy Spirit as a permanent gift, while the prophets had received it in a restricted measure, and only at times. The "*primogenitus*," says Harnack, is ancient. We do not deny it, and only remark that it is used here with an unusual application; whilst in St. Matthew and St. Luke Jesus is Mary's first-born, here He is the firstborn of the Holy Spirit. This primogeniture is nearer to the sense of St. Paul, of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and nearer still, we may add, to the Rabbinical theories of pre-existence.

In the third *logion*<sup>2</sup> we here discuss, Jesus calls the Holy Ghost His mother. He tells His disciples how that mother, having taken Him by a hair of His head, had lately carried Him up to a high mountain. Jesus no longer recognised Mary as His mother; His human generation is left in the background. The Holy Spirit, who co-operated in His conception, becomes a feminine principle of generation. So great is the power of that Spirit, so light, so agile

<sup>1</sup> Factum est autem, quum ascendisset Dominus de aqua, descendit fons omnis Spiritus Sancti et requievit super eum, et dixit illi: "Fili mi, in omnibus prophetis expectabam te, ut venires et requiescerem in te. Tu es enim requies mea, tu es filius meus primogenitus, qui regnas in sempiternum."

<sup>2</sup> "Ἀρτι ἔλαθέ με ἡ μήτηρ μου τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα ἐν μιᾷ τῶν τριχῶν μου καὶ ἀπήνεγκέ με εἰς τὸ ὄρος τὸ μέγα θαθώρ.

the body of Jesus, that it can be raised on high by a single hair. What an abyss between the bad taste of this grotesque recital and the simplicity and serenity of the synoptics! Who does not recognise here the play of childish and disordered imaginations?

Let us take one more passage from the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*; the apparition of our Lord to James.<sup>1</sup> This apostle had sworn, when our Lord "drank His chalice," not to break bread till he had seen Him risen again. The writer's object is to magnify the greatness of James's faith and hope at a moment when all the others despaired. He was the only one to swear, because he alone believed that our Lord would rise again; and so he is privileged, for to him the risen Saviour first appears. The intention of the story is clear; its object is to exalt and glorify the Judaising apostle. Harnack himself admits that here we are sunk to the level of simple legend.

All critics agree that passages have been touched up, and that *logia* have been invented or specially adapted to suit local circumstances. The general impression we gather from these fragments is that the *Hebrew gospel* has not preserved a primitive

<sup>1</sup> Dominus autem quum dedisset sindonem servo sacerdotis ivit ad Jacobum et apparuit ei; juraverat enim Jacobus se non comesturum panem ab illa hora qua biberat calicem Domini donec videret eum resurgentem a dormientibus. *Rursusque post paululum*: Afferte, ait Dominus, mensam et panem. *Statinque additur*: Tulit panem et benedixit ac fregit et dedit Jacobo justo et dixit ei: "Frater mi, comede panem tuum, quia resurrexit filius hominis a dormientibus."

simplicity. Jesus is the Firstborn of the Holy Spirit, expected through the ages, destined to reign for ever; after His baptism the Holy Ghost becomes His mother; His personality and mission are amplified and exaggerated, adapted to Jewish preconceptions. James is the first of the apostles, holding the first place by reason of his faith, and the privilege of being the first witness of the resurrection. The christology of this gospel, more elaborate than that of the synoptics, bears no relationship to that of St. Paul, much less to St. John's, and these throw no light whatever upon it. The christology of the *Hebrew gospel* must, therefore, have been developed in a place apart, out of touch with the great churches, and especially removed from the Greek churches of Syria. Though derived from St. Matthew's gospel, it was the only gospel of the Nazarenes, who did not scruple to gloss its meaning and disfigure it. Herein, we believe, lies the explanation of the exclusion of the *Hebrew gospel* from the Canon.

Its fortunes were closely bound up with those of the church which read it. The historian is surprised at not being able to fix the precise date when the Judaising Christians were ejected from the universal Church. He fails to bear in mind that the rupture with the Nazarenes was neither violent nor abrupt. The group of Christians on the slopes of Galaad and in the plains of Hauran and Batanaea severed by degrees only the bonds uniting them with other communities, and in the same way broke little

by little with the great current of Christian life and doctrine which circulated in their midst. Many travellers pass and observe no change, until one comes who finds that the life is extinct and all communion of ideas at an end. As these quiet and inoffensive Christians drifted away from orthodoxy slowly and silently, so was it with their gospel. Small changes were at first made, and very timidly ; later they became more serious, and only long afterwards was it observed how this gospel had been transformed, loaded with strange conceits, and thrown out of all harmony with the Catholic gospels. Suspicion was excited against it, and it shared the discredit into which the Church that used it had fallen. It ceased to be orthodox when the Nazarenes ceased to be orthodox. The churches, aroused by the heresies of the second century, were led to fix their Canon. They came across a gospel evidently related to that of St. Matthew, but in some ways quite unlike it, and the text disfigured. They rejected it ; and what wonder?

To expect to find a formal decree suddenly intervening and imposing a fixed Canon on all the churches is to look for something inconsistent with the first conditions of ecclesiastical history. Each church endeavoured to harmonise its traditions with those of the general body. The process was slow ; it needed, if not a century, at least many years, and it did not proceed everywhere with the same rapidity. The churches which had received the *Hebrew gospel* did



not cease all at once to read it publicly. Besides, though admittedly not one of the gospels "handed down" by tradition, to use the expression of Clement of Alexandria,<sup>1</sup> it was still quoted. Its *logia* had become so well known through the catecheses that they were often recalled; even if the source was not pure, it probably furnished authentic sayings of our Lord. There was also less mistrust of it, as it was never considered heretical and dangerous in the same way as the *Gospel according to the Egyptians* and the *Gospel of Peter*.

## IV

We have already said that the *Gospel of the Hebrews* and the *Gospel of the Egyptians* had a separate history, and that we should be careful to distinguish their origins. The former was derived from a canonical gospel, and was read by a church which for a long time passed for orthodox; the latter, on the contrary, bears undoubted marks of being a sectarian gospel. Harnack's contention is that it was the gospel of all the native Christians of Egypt. He begins by discussing its title. It is called the *Gospel according to the Egyptians*, and therefore, he concludes, it was read everywhere and exclusively. Could Clement of Alexandria, he asks, have given it this name if it had been the gospel merely of some small heretical communities? According

<sup>1</sup> *Strom.*, iii. 13.

to him, its history may be summed up thus: it was at first the only gospel read; then its readers tolerated the fourfold gospel side by side with it; finally, ejected by the latter, it fell gradually into the discredit which attached to apocryphal gospels.

Is it justifiable to take as the basis of an argument the obscure title which is almost an enigma, and seek by means of it to explain the character and expansion of the writing itself? Is it not sounder criticism to go to the book itself, and to make use of whatever light historical testimony may throw upon it? We think that we have established that, among the canonical gospels, those of St. Luke and St. John were known in Egypt from the first third of the second century. We do not know whether the *Gospel of the Egyptians* had been written by that date. And even when it had circulated, what credit could it have in comparison with two Catholic gospels: gospels, that is, accepted in every church; and written, the one by an apostle, the other by the follower of an apostle? Harnack fixes the date of this apocryphal gospel (*according to the Egyptians*) somewhere between the end of the first century and the year 130; that it bears no writer's name he holds to be a proof of its great antiquity. According to this conjecture, this gospel must have been the first used in Egypt, and the churches of that country had to be contented with oral catechetical instructions at a time when neighbouring churches possessed several gospels. On the other hand, if

the lives of our Lord, which later were called canonical, were already in circulation, it has to be explained how they were ousted by this.

Nor is it possible to refer the origin of this apocryphal *Gospel of the Egyptians* to the first fixation of the oral catecheses. To prove this we have but to recall who were its readers, and to examine the few texts which have come down to us. It was read by the Naassenians, by some Valentinians, and especially by the Encratites. Clement, whose inquiring tendencies and habits of collecting we know, does not seem to have possessed a copy. He merely quotes Cassian and a certain Theodotus. It must consequently have been very rare. Origen, too, seems to imply the same:<sup>1</sup> "The church has four gospels; the heretics many more, one of which bears the title of the *Gospel according to the Egyptians*." And then, after mentioning several apocryphal gospels, he adds: "We have read several others; for it must not be thought there is something we do not know, by reason of those who think no little of themselves, because they happen to know these things." The Alexandrian doctor had therefore taken the trouble to hunt for a copy of it, and to make special mention of it. It is more accurate, we think, to consider it the work of the sects, prepared for the use of the initiated who laid claim to know secret *logia* and to reserve to themselves

<sup>1</sup> Homilia I. in Lucam.

the interpretation of the utterances of Jesus. Moreover, the words ascribed to our Saviour are characteristic; they make Him teach the metempsychosis; He is made to declare Himself identical with the Father, identical with the Holy Spirit; they attribute to Him strange words against marriage. Surely the tendency of such *logia* obviously takes us back to the troubled times of gnosticism, where heresy stopped short of no audacity. How can Harnack say that this gospel was read by all the native Christians of Egypt, and so stigmatise all the churches of that great country as tainted with the grossest of errors, as early as the end of the first century? This is simply without evidence to throw over the early history of Christianity; for the doctors of Alexandria, Clement and Origen, tell us nothing of such a state of things; and we search in vain for any trace of a deviation from sound Christian teaching so radical and so widespread.

It has been asked whether the author of the Clementine Homilies knew of this gospel, and drew from it directly the curious *logion*<sup>1</sup> found in the twelfth chapter. This *logion* is quoted inaccurately, imperfectly, and in a topsy-turvy fashion. The writer, in fact, gives it a meaning which outrages the context in the *Gospel according to the Egyptians*. Had he had before him the complete dialogue of Salome,

<sup>1</sup> "Les logia du papyrus de Behnesa," par Batiffol, *Revue Biblique*, 1<sup>er</sup> Octobre, 1897.

it would have been difficult for him to rescue his text from its debased Encratite environment, and give it a high moral sense. For our purpose we may quote M. Batiffol's judgment: "One might conclude that the *Secunda Clementis* cites a well-known passage, a mere quotation; but this is very far removed from the supposition that the *Secunda Clementis* holds the gospel of the Egyptians for canonical scripture. What authority then remains in support of this famous gospel? That it is quoted by Cassian, and by Theodotus, when it has been proved that Theodotus's quotation was not taken from Cassian."

Harnack himself admits that there is less to be said for the *Gospel of Peter* than for the *Gospel according to the Egyptians*. Its title is pretentious: the author relies on the borrowed name of an apostle, to cover the tardy appearance of his work. It may have been written between 110 and 130, but not later, for St. Justin quotes it. Though a late work in comparison with the *Gospel of the Hebrews* and the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, it is not without value to the argument of the learned critic. A gospel, he says, which makes free with other gospels, which sometimes amplifies them with legendary details, and sometimes curtails them, which at times leaves them altogether to follow a different tradition, is an unfavourable witness to the canonical authority of the four gospels.

Is this not putting too great a value upon a work

which is frankly extravagant, giving too great an authority to a writer who keeps himself constantly in view, who embellishes the story with a tearful commentary at the pauses, who tries to produce a touching and edifying narrative by a harmony of the gospels interwoven with legendary anecdotes? Look at some of the preachers of our own day—perfectly orthodox—who have no scruple in blending the revelations of Catherine Emmerich with the gospel text, and in endeavouring to harmonise one with the other.

Another conclusion, and more worthy of serious attention, is to be drawn from the *Gospel of Peter*. In the judgment of all, it contains quotations from our four gospels. In it the Johannine tradition is completely fused with the synoptic; it was composed (according to Harnack) at some date from 110 to 130, probably among the Greek communities of Syria. These facts are worth bearing in mind. So then, from the first years of the second century the four canonical gospels were already grouped in Syria. What, in that case, becomes of the constitution of the fourfold gospel in Asia between 120 and 140, according to Harnack, and its gradual dissemination in the other churches from the middle of the second century onwards? If we wish to know what was its authority, no matter whether that authority was exclusive or not, a sound judgment cannot be based on the rulings of dissident or quasi-dissident communities. That orthodox writers like Justin should have quoted



the *Gospel of Peter*, or, for that matter, accepted the accuracy of its teaching, is sufficiently explained by the fact that its Docetan leanings were artfully dissimulated; and, further, that it was allowable to believe that not every one of its historical relations was false. Observe that it cannot be proved that St. Justin ranked it with the canonical gospels and placed it among the "Memoirs of the Apostles." Did he even quote it?

Taylor believes that he has found traces of the fourfold gospel in the *Shepherd* of Hermas.<sup>1</sup> He has only found Resch, Duchesne, and, perhaps, Canon Sanday, to agree with him. All other critics reject the suggestion, and rightly. One has only to read the *Shepherd* to be convinced that the notion of the Church founded on the four gospels is quite outside his scope and scheme. If there is any connection between St. Irenæus and Hermas, it is no more than a literary indebtedness, amounting merely to the borrowing of formulæ.

We recall the see-saw movement which, according to Harnack, resulted in the constitution of the fourfold gospel; and how the intervention of the Alogi was necessary to diminish the prestige of the fourth gospel. This intervention then played a most important part, since it effected the compromise and the levelling process whence issued our Canon of the gospels.

<sup>1</sup> *The Witness of Hermas to the Four Gospels*, London, 1892.

We confess that in the learned critic's chronology we have completely lost our reckoning, as regards both Alogi and the fourfold gospel. The latter was formed not later than 140, possibly as early as 120. On the other hand, the onslaughts of the Alogi are contemporary with the Montanist movement, in relation to which they appear in the light of a reaction; but the Montanist heresy belongs to the latter half of the second century. It seems to us impossible to reconcile the two dates.

From this chapter, then, we may conclude:—

(1) That before the end of the first century the gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark had spread beyond the limits of the region of their origin, and had been read by St. Luke; that in the early years of the second century the three synoptics had gained their position in all the important churches of the seaboard. There was then no room for the *Gospel of the Egyptians* and the *Gospel of Peter*; beside which, it is doubtful whether they were then written.

(2) The gospel of St. John was known and acknowledged at Antioch at one and the same time with the synoptics from the second decade of the second century at latest. No word of contention on the matter reaches us.

(3) The *Gospel of the Hebrews* is all that is available for the foundation of Harnack's argument; for it is the only one of the rejected gospels which had been accepted by orthodox churches. As we have seen, its history is easily understood: it was read

because it was known to be derived from an apostolic gospel. When, on the one side, it had been disfigured and made unlike the canonical gospels, and on the other, its habitual readers ceased to form part of the great Church, it fell under suspicion, and was at length abandoned.

Whence, then, comes the fourfold gospel? Which of the churches imposed its use upon the rest? There is no intrinsic objection to the view that the Canon of the gospels was constituted in Asia rather than elsewhere; nevertheless, the incident which occurred in that area on the subject of Mark seems to us to have been unreasonably exaggerated by Harnack. The fourfold gospel was constituted for all practical purposes on the day when the principle was adopted in the churches that the apostles, the exclusive witnesses of Jesus, must exclusively be his authorised biographers. This or that church may have hesitated, and accepted the Canon with more or less alacrity, but the principle was in existence. The question of the material grouping of the gospels is only secondary, dependent as it is upon conditions of time and place.

If it be thought that these arguments are more elaborate than was required to meet a hypothesis open to many *a priori* objections, and resting on such slender premises, it is necessary to remember what great importance the Berlin professor attaches to his conclusions, and how lately he has brought his theories before the lay public of his country. If we consider

that his notions are subversive of the history of the origins of Christianity, destroy the value of the canonical gospels, by placing the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, the *Gospel of Peter* on an equality with them, we must admit that the subject called for strong criticism.

## II

### THE SUPERNATURAL CONCEPTION

THE history of Jesus begins with a supernatural occurrence — the virginal conception. The incarnate Son of God was born, according to St. Matthew and St. Luke, outside the ordinary law of human generation. That same Spirit which, at the beginning of all things, presided at the Creation, and caused life to spring forth from the pre-existent void, appears again at the time of the Incarnation. By means of His almighty action, the Virgin chosen by God becomes the mother of the Holy Being, who later will claim nothing less than divine paternity.

This is the dominant factor in the pre-history of the Saviour. The accounts we have of the Annunciation, the Nativity, and of the first days of the life of the Infant of Nazareth, all converge upon this fact. So that the attacks delivered lately by German critics against the historical value of the virginal conception have reflected on the events connected with it. The messages to Zachary and to Mary, and the night of Bethlehem, were, according to some of these critics, the outcome of legend, or of reveries which had their

source in Christian Palestine, or, as others say, were the outcome of later theological speculations.

We state these objections as they are found in all scholarly commentaries, and review the position adopted by believers, whether Catholic or orthodox Protestant. We should like every reader to convince himself that such positions are still good and perfectly defensible; that the cycle of events at Nazareth and Bethlehem are historical, and able to bear the test of critical exegesis, and that we may retain in its entirety the article of the Creed: *Conceptus de Spiritu Sancto, natus ex Maria Virgine*.

According to primitive sources, of which Mark remains the unchanged type, the Messianic life of Jesus began with His baptism; then it was, according to the critics, that His consciousness of being the Son of God was for the first time awakened. The Incarnation, that is to say, the communication of the divine life to a child of earth, was effected, they say, at the Jordan by the descent of the Holy Ghost, and this was the faith of the Galilean disciples. The early evangelical writings were devoid of prologue; they either knew nothing of the humble beginnings of the "carpenter"<sup>1</sup> of Nazareth, who came into the world like any other of the children of Adam, or passed them over in silence. The prophetic call is first heard, and the rise of the Messianic idea takes place on the banks of the sacred river; this is the first page of the history,

<sup>1</sup> Mark vi. 3.



the Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.<sup>1</sup> In order to understand this primitive faith, we must have recourse to the gospel of Mark. The gospels of Saints Matthew and Luke bear traces of the hand of the theologian, and of the demands of popular legend : they are not primitive writings. The prelude of St. Luke is a parallel to the speculations concerning the pre-existence of the *Logos* in that of St. John, but with this difference : instead of the Divine Sonship being explained in a metaphysical sense, the synoptic writer traces a material and physical Divine Sonship. If we wish to know the belief of the first disciples on the subject of the birth of Jesus, we must begin with the gospel of St. Mark, and collect whatever primitive texts remain untouched by St. Matthew and St. Luke. We can thus determine the actual fact, and understand exactly what that fact means.

These critics assure us that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a woman like other women ; a mother like any other. All we know of her, whether at Nazareth<sup>2</sup> or at Capharnaum,<sup>3</sup> is that she was married, and was the wife of Joseph. She had her firstborn, Jesus, then four other sons, one of whom bore the name of his father, Joseph, and some daughters. In an account taken by St. Luke,<sup>4</sup> seem-

<sup>1</sup> Mark i. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Mark vi. 3 ; Matthew viii. 55, 56.

<sup>3</sup> Mark iii. 22.

<sup>4</sup> ii. 43-50.

ingly, from an Ebionite source, which he has incautiously reproduced, Mary is represented as being astounded at the answer Jesus gives to her when she discovered Him among the doctors in the temple. His precocious religious preoccupations, and the mysterious Father, all seem to her very strange, and the whole family refuse to admit in Him any special prerogatives or any special religious mission ; much less have they any belief in a supernatural birth. "And when His relations heard of it, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said : He is become mad." Later on we find Jesus turning His back on Nazareth, disconcerted to some extent by the incredulity of the inhabitants and His own relations.<sup>1</sup> "A prophet is not without honour but in his own country, and in his own house and among his own kindred." Here we are confronted by authentic facts. How can they be reconciled with a supernatural birth and an infancy unlike that of other children?

St. Paul did not find in the tradition which he knew and preached, primitive as it was, any suggestion of the mystery described by St. Luke and St. Matthew. When he has to speak of the coming of the Messiah into the world, when he wishes to emphasise the incomparable holiness of Jesus, he never once refers to the virgin birth. He only knows one thing about it, that "according to the flesh"

<sup>1</sup> Mark vi. 4.

Christ is of "the Fathers."<sup>1</sup> He even uses expressions which seem to exclude the idea of supernatural conception,<sup>2</sup> as when he declares Him to be "of the seed of David according to the flesh." And yet more clearly is this idea expressed in the Epistle to the Galatians :<sup>3</sup> "When the fulness of time was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law." St. Paul wishes it to be clearly understood that God made no distinction in favour of His Son, nor placed Him in this world under other conditions than are the lot of mankind in general. He is born like other men ; like other men is placed under the yoke of the law, and as such has no special privilege.

In a better way than any other book, the Acts of the Apostles seems to have preserved intact the original type of Jesus ; it reveals Him as simple and human, as He was. Six times it calls the Saviour Jesus of Nazareth, without further qualification. He is a man,<sup>4</sup> He is the son of David,<sup>5</sup> the Holy Ghost seemingly consecrates Him.<sup>6</sup> He is the prophet, neither more nor less, foretold by Moses and the others sent by God who went before Him. He is

<sup>1</sup> Epistle to the Romans ix. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Lobstein, *Die Lehre von der übernatürlichen Geburt Christi*, 1896, p. 116. Ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα ; Romans i. 3. Galatians iii. 16 : Τῷ σπέρματι σου, ὅς ἐστιν Χριστός. Romans iv. 13 : ἡ ἐπαγγελία τῷ Ἀβραάμ ἢ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ.

<sup>3</sup> iv. 4.

<sup>4</sup> ii. 22.

<sup>5</sup> ii. 30 : ἐκ καρποῦ τῆς ὁσφύος αὐτοῦ ; xiii. 32 : ἀπὸ τοῦ σπέρματος.

<sup>6</sup> iv. 25 *et seq.* ; x. 38.

apparently of the same order, He has the same stamp; He closes the line, and only excels the others because He is the son of David, commissioned to restore the throne of David upon a new basis and after a new plan. One looks in vain for any indication of a miraculous birth in the account of the origin of the divine mission, where the text has not been transformed by St. Luke. The first flights of the Christian consciousness are there seen checked and held by the immense reality.

The fourth evangelist not only says nothing about the mystery of the supernatural conception, but when he narrates the words of the acquaintances of Jesus, declaring that they knew His father, He does not correct them, and so the reader is forced to follow their mode of thinking. Jesus says He came down from heaven; and the Galileans reply: "Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?"<sup>1</sup> Twice again the same murmurs are repeated.<sup>2</sup> The writer appears to accept the popular belief, and not to disapprove of it, for he never contradicts. John, like the synoptists, recounts a humiliating family incident, which leaves no room for any supposition of a miraculous birth.

Do not all the indications which St. Mark has preserved, which can be dimly traced, too, in the substrata of the gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke, which are picked up again in St. Paul and St. John, that is, in writings scattered through the whole length

<sup>1</sup> vi. 42.

<sup>2</sup> vii. 42, 52.

of the first century, do they not force us to the conclusion that the birth of Jesus was a natural birth, that the Saviour came into the world, born of a father and mother, by the ordinary way of human generation, and that such was the faith of the apostles and the first Christians?

But this belief is contradicted by two of the evangelists, St. Matthew and St. Luke. They speak of a divine generation. Their preludes are minute narratives of a birth out of the ordinary course, presented in an incomparable setting of heavenly greetings and angelic apparitions. These preludes constitute the gospel of the divine infancy, and they precede the true gospel, that which begins with the baptism. For the historian and critic, then, what is the precise value of those first pages? They have practically no value; or, if they have any, it is of the slightest. They contain two quite different genealogies, which it is impossible to reconcile; and that is not their chief blemish, for they bear distinct traces of deliberate adaptation. Each was introduced to prove that Jesus was the Messiah, the descendant of David in the male line; but the arrangement is so clumsy that the object is not attained; the conclusion they support is the exact contrary of that for the sake of which they were counterfeited. Jesus is precisely not the son of David, because Joseph, by whom He is of the blood of David, is not His father. The two accounts also clash whenever they meet. For example, the principal historical fact,

narrated by St. Matthew, is the adoration of the wise men, which was immediately followed by the flight into Egypt. Now this occurrence has no place in the gospel of St. Luke, which is so constructed as positively to exclude the journey to Egypt, for he says (and with this he closes and definitely stamps the narrative): "And after they had performed all these things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their city of Nazareth."<sup>5</sup> Further, Joseph lived, according to St. Luke, in the town of Nazareth; according to St. Matthew, he lived at Bethlehem. It was to the latter town that the head of the family returns to resume his ordinary life. It is a special command brought by an angel which forces him, for the safety of the Child, to go away and hide in Galilee.<sup>2</sup>

The Gospel of the Infancy consists of statements which cannot bear the most friendly critical examination, and which are incapable of mutual reconciliation, and impossible to harmonise. Its value, then, is not great. Rationalist theologians are not satisfied with having recovered the true primitive fact, and with having demonstrated that the belief in the supernatural conception is an accretion, and a late one; they must establish and account for the origin of this belief. How and under what influences, they ask, was this doctrine formed, enlarged, and sanc-

<sup>1</sup> Luke ii. 39.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew ii. 22. χρηματισθεὶς δὲ κατ' ἀνεχώρησεν εἰς τὰ μέρη τῆς Γλιλαίας,



tioned? Was it established in a short time? Did it come into being shortly after the time of the apostles? Holtzmann declares that its origin is to be attributed to theological speculation, aided by popular legend. The whole of christology is contained in germ in the assertion of Jesus that He is "the Son of God." This utterance is heard and understood diversely, according to the intelligence of the hearer. Taken up by a Greek intelligence, in which metaphysical concepts prevail, it is interpreted as a metaphysical formula, and leads ultimately to the identification of the Son of God with the *Logos* which had been conceived by the philosophies of the time. The Son of God who appears in Galilee becomes "the only Son of God." Among Christians who are devoid of all culture, on the contrary, the divine Sonship requires for its explanation the supernatural conception, by the process of reasoning with which we are acquainted. If Jesus is the Son of God, He is not the son of a man: He has no human progenitor; and as the Holy Ghost is held to have consecrated Him, and in a way made Him the Messiah, the event is anticipated, and the action of the Spirit carried back to His birth. Such was the origin of the belief. The generation of Jesus, outside the laws of nature, was not assigned for the purpose of assuring His sanctity: marriage was a holy thing, its fruit the blessing of heaven. The asceticism of the contrary tendency which obtained

later in certain Jewish communities did not influence Christian belief.

Nevertheless, the first germs of this dogma were to be found in the sacred books; and thence, seemingly, the two evangelists of the Infancy derived them. St. Matthew was acquainted with the prophecy of Isaiah, and quoted it to show that the Messiah was to be born of a virgin. It is the same with St. Luke. His characters are drawn with the pose and attributes of biblical heroes. All his holy personages act, speak, pray, and sing like the holy men of Israel, like the mothers who have received the special benediction of Yahweh. All the miraculous births of the Old Testament, both in the cycle of annunciations and in the cycle of nativities, have here their echo. If St. John was supposed to have received the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb, should not the Son of God have been conceived by the Holy Spirit Himself? Thus may easily have grown up in a perfectly natural way the belief in a supernatural birth.

St. Paul, in another way, fixed certain principles, which, whether according to his intention or not, must have favoured the origin of the dogma. The power of God, according to the apostle, played a leading part in the birth of Isaac out of the course of nature. Might not a disciple conclude that the same power had acted alone in the incarnation of Christ, to the exclusion of all human co-operation? At great length St. Paul describes Jesus as a new Adam, the perfect

type of man as God made him. Now if the first Adam came directly from God, it is easy to believe that the second Adam, the Regenerator, the Holy One, should have God for His Father. Such teachings and reasonings would be, according to Holtzmann, the first germs whence sprang the dogma of the supernatural conception. But these germs could not fructify and ripen in the Jewish mind; the soil was poor and the conditions unfavourable. God, reduced to an abstract, transcendent concept by the theology of the time, could not act directly in this world, nor co-operate in so material a work as human generation. Moreover, it was repugnant to the Hebrew mind to accord to the Holy Spirit the function of generator, since His action was regarded as a feminine principle. Christians of pagan origin, on the contrary, were ready to look upon Jesus as born of God and Mary. Could those who attributed superhuman birth to their sages, to Pythagoras and Plato, to their great generals, to Alexander and Augustus, accept as the envoy of God and Son of God a man whose father was an obscure Galilean? In the midst of the Christian communities of Greece, then, the dogma must have been definitely established and formulated. Here, Holtzmann concludes, we have to do not with any popular legend or myth, but with a dogmatic structure. The ground for this conclusion is the fact that the two accounts of St. Luke and St. Matthew, which in general cannot be harmonised, agree upon only two points, and those exclusively theological:

the generation by the Holy Ghost and the birth at Bethlehem, the one the product of Christian christology developed in a pagan atmosphere, the other of Jewish Messianic preconceptions.

## II

The foregoing is a *précis* of the latest difficulties put forward by the critics; difficulties which, they believe, warrant them in detaching the prologues of St. Matthew and St. Luke from the gospels, and entering immediately upon the life of Jesus, without coming to it through the consideration of the mystery. We have endeavoured to arrange these difficulties, and to present them with all their weight and force; and we admit that, as a whole, they do make an impression. It is important to begin the discussion of these arguments methodically. We set aside all philosophical debate on the possibility of a supernatural conception and of angelic apparitions, since our adversaries avoid all recourse to them, and claim to restrict their studies to the texts and to conclusions they are constrained by the evidence to derive from them. At the same time we may ask ourselves whether their criticism is not really inspired by reminiscences of the doctrines of Kant and Lotze; that is, whether they have not proceeded to the examination or, we might say, the destruction of the gospel of the Infancy, having their minds already

made up on the ground that because a fact is miraculous it cannot be historic, and so must be treated as legendary.

We shall first inquire whether it can be shown from the writings of St. Mark, St. Paul, and St. John that a primitive belief existed which excluded the supernatural conception. We shall then try to determine and estimate the historical value of St. Luke's narrative, and conclude with a short inquiry on tradition.

The critics, as we have seen, take as the groundwork of their knowledge the gospel of St. Mark. This, according to them, is the pure type of the primitive gospel, because it has no prologue; and they explain its silence on the subject as unfavourable to the miraculous birth. The Evangelist's reason for not mentioning it, they suggest, must either be that when he wrote the legend was not yet established, or that he simply rejected it. At the outset we must remove a misconception. It would be a gross mistake to consider an evangelist as the same as a biographer of Jesus. The gospel of Jesus is not the life of Jesus. The gospel is the preaching of the Kingdom of God by Jesus Christ. To write a Gospel is to commit that preaching to writing, and the preaching begins with the baptism. Even if St. Mark were posterior to St. Matthew and St. Luke, he might have omitted the story of the Infancy without such omission being a sign of any distrust or condemnation of it. His actual intention is not to write a

life of Jesus, but to furnish an account of His gospel and His preaching, since he entitles his book : "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God." The old sentence of the Presbyter John, which Papias has preserved, supports this explanation. St. Mark was requested by the faithful of Rome to set down the preaching of St. Peter, and we know that the preaching of the gospel comprised the sayings of the Lord, and the chief facts of His public life, His miracles, His passion, and His resurrection.

The critics have concluded from certain scenes in the gospels that the brothers of Jesus refused to recognise His miraculous birth ; these are the reflections made on our Lord's state of mind, and His exile from Nazareth. If these words and incidents allow the historian to draw any conclusion unfavourable to the supernatural conception, they ought also to oblige him to decide against the Messianic manifestation at the baptism, to deny the miracles, and to strip Jesus wholly of His supernatural character. The brothers of Jesus, notwithstanding His long apostolate, notwithstanding the wonders worked by Him in public, of which they were themselves witnesses, six months before the Passion are still incredulous. Would the miraculous birth have been a more strongly determining motive of belief? Besides, we do not say that the supernatural birth was known to the Nazarenes, or even to those whom the evangelists call "the brothers of Jesus." The "blessed mystery" was long kept secret, as we shall presently



show. Attention has been drawn to a passage of St. Mark<sup>1</sup> concerning the parents of Jesus, which is well worthy of comparison as a parallel with passages in St. Matthew and St. Luke. St. Mark seems to have divided and grouped the members of the Nazarene family, and distinguished the degrees of relationship. "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary . . . the brother of James and Joseph and Jude and Simon?" It was Baur who first detected in St. Mark the purpose of not offending the belief in the supernatural conception; while St. Matthew and St. Luke, recording the fact that the people called Jesus "the son of the carpenter" and "the son of Joseph," knew that their readers would not accept in the literal sense the common mode of speech, since their prologues precluded any error on the subject. St. Mark, on the other hand, who had no prologue, could not have recorded such expressions. Instead of writing "Is not this the son of Joseph?" he cautiously sets down "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" These remarks seem to us well founded. It is not asking too much to suppose that St. Mark was among those who believed in the miraculous birth. Since his object was not to narrate the life of Jesus, but to present the gospel of Jesus, he appears to have passed it over in silence, taking care, however, to prevent any possible misunderstanding on the part of his readers. Does not the care with which he divides the family of Nazareth into two groups

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mark vi. 3; Matthew xiii. 55; Luke iv. 22.

prove that he regarded Jesus as the only child of Mary, and the brothers of Jesus as related to Him in other ways? In any case, if he did believe in the supernatural birth of Jesus and the virginity of Mary, he would not have written otherwise.

We turn to the criticism passed upon the view of St. Paul and the negative conclusions drawn from it. The apostle not only knew nothing of the supernatural conception, we are told, but his language would appear to preclude the possibility of it. Also it is said that positive affirmations are to be met with in the epistles, that Jesus came into the world by the ordinary way of generation.

St. Paul's silence on the mystery of the incarnation should not surprise us. The apostle is a theologian and moralist, not a historian; it was not his intention to write a life of Jesus. He has made allusion to three facts only in the life of Jesus, and he has referred to those on account of their dogmatic and christological interest: the institution of the Eucharist, the Passion, and the Resurrection; the rest he leaves aside. The Baptism, which to the Syrian and Palestinian sects seemed so important, upon which the dwellers along the sacred river expended all their speculative genius, does not appear to have struck the apostle; he left it unnoticed; *a fortiori* he could neglect the supernatural conception.

We may here be allowed to ask a question, by no means without interest to our thesis: What is the literary relationship between St. Paul and St. Luke?

It cannot be denied that a considerable number of *logia*<sup>1</sup> are common to the two. Among the evangelists St. Luke alone has preserved them. St. Paul reproduces and utters them without any warning that they are the sayings of our Lord. So deeply had he meditated upon them, so thoroughly had he assimilated them, that in a way they had become his own thoughts, and appear in his writings as if original; so much so that we should suppose they were really his but for St. Luke's testimony that they formed part of the message of Jesus. These *logia* are found in the early epistles, in those which date back to the year 48. St. Paul must have known these sayings of our Lord from special documents, or, if we prefer to think so, he must have had access to some catechetical writing, unknown to the other evangelists, which he handed on to St. Luke. There is no other solution. The evangelist who, in the Acts and the later epistles, is seen constantly at the apostle's side, his faithful and inseparable companion in the first and second captivities, would have heard from his master discourses of our Lord which were unknown to others. If it is saying too much to call the third gospel the gospel of Paul, the sentence of Tertullian deserves to be borne in mind: "Paul was the illuminator of Luke."<sup>2</sup> This literary and doctrinal dependence being established, it may be asked, if

<sup>1</sup> Plummer, *The Gospel According to St. Luke*, p. xlv.

<sup>2</sup> *Adv. Marcion.*, v. 5. According to St. Irenæus (iii. 1), Luke, the companion of St. Paul, set down the gospel preached by the apostle.

Luke had heard his master declare categorically that Jesus was the son of Joseph, and that the Davidic descent was only to be accounted for by ascent in the male line, is it conceivable that he could have contradicted in so emphatic a manner the teaching he had received, and founded the royal origin of Jesus upon the virginal conception? The question whether St. Paul was acquainted with the Gospel of the Infancy, of which his disciple made use, is one to which the labour of Resch has now given a new interest.<sup>1</sup> We do not believe that the traces of that gospel in St. Paul are either so numerous or characteristic as this scholar makes out. Nevertheless, the resemblances established between the Gospel of the Infancy and the last chapters of the Epistle to the Ephesians have arrested the attention of the best critics.<sup>2</sup>

We select the exhortation of St. Paul,<sup>3</sup> "And be not drunk with wine . . . but be ye filled with the Holy Spirit." We ask ourselves by what strange association of ideas Paul passes from the one to the other, and opposes to the warning "not to be

<sup>1</sup> *Das Kindheitsevangeliium nach Lucas und Matthæus, Texte und Untersuchungen*, Leipzig, 1896.

<sup>2</sup> Soden, one of the collaborators of the *Handcommentar* of Holtzmann, has identified some of these parallel passages in his study, "Das Interesse des apostolischen Zeitalters an der evangelischen Geschichte" (*Theologische Abhandlungen zum Weizsacker-Jubiläum*, p. 130). He can only escape our conclusion by denying the authenticity of the Epistle to the Ephesians.

<sup>3</sup> Ephesians v. 18; Luke i. 15.

drunken" the exhortation "to be filled with the Holy Spirit." Must not the association have been suggested by the words of the Angel to Zacharias: "He . . . shall drink no wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost"?

The best historical commentary upon the text of the Epistle to the Galatians: "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law," seems to us to be furnished by the first two chapters of St. Luke. Beyond the undoubted literary affinity, what strikes the reader is the insistence with which St. Luke recalls how Jesus as a child was under the law. The circumcision, the purification, the presentation in the Temple, are described with special reference to the written law. Not until everything had been accomplished according to the law of Yahweh does the holy family return to Nazareth. Is it not to the "Gospel of the Infancy" that we must look to find an explanation of St. Paul's train of thought? What is the impression which an unprejudiced and really independent reader would derive from St. Paul's epistles as a whole? The apostle has not written a single word which precludes the supernatural conception. If he has not alluded to this fact, if he has not developed it, it is because he did not enter upon what we may call theological postulates. Supposing that he accepted the fact of the supernatural conception, he could not have spoken with more delicate reserve than he has spoken of the Davidic descent of Jesus,

who is "born of woman." Besides, most probably he knew the primitive "Gospel of the Infancy." Could St. Paul have regarded the Holy One of God as a son of sinful Adam, who was the source of sin for all his descendants? If the first Adam was of God, should not the second, for better reasons, be born of God directly?

The critics congratulate themselves that they have found even in St. John something in support of what they pretend was the primitive belief; namely, his silence on the subject, which they regard as unfavourable to the supernatural conception. For our part, we hold that this silence can only be interpreted in the contrary sense. It is beyond all doubt that the author of the fourth gospel knew the gospel of St. Matthew and St. Luke.<sup>1</sup> If his belief had been contrary to that of the two writers of the "Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus," why, we ask, did he not emphatically assert his own faith in opposition to the new dogma which was beginning to creep into the churches. Would silence have sufficed to vindicate his orthodoxy? Are we not justified then in interpreting the silence of St. John as really favourable to our thesis, and in believing that St. John accepted unreservedly the fact of the supernatural birth?

So far from having forgotten and omitted it, he

<sup>1</sup> Jülicher, *Einleitung*, p. 247; Weiss, *Einleitung*, p. 568. Assuredly, the reasons which the critics put forward to prove the dependence of St. John as regards the synoptists should be received by us with some mistrust. But we are reasoning according to their hypothesis, and we are not forbidden to take advantage of a concession.



would, according to Resch, have made explicit mention of it. We shall not speak of the very doubtful resemblances which the ingenious scholar thinks he has found between the historical prologue of St. Luke and the metaphysical prologue of St. John. At the same time, we must not be too ready to reject without examination the general relationship which he has endeavoured to establish. The metaphors of "Light" and "Darkness," the ideas of "Life" and "Grace," the great importance given to "Faith," are, as a matter of fact, common to both. In St. Luke they have a Jewish setting, in St. John they are translated into higher language, fructified by intense "theological meditations," and all but transformed.

Holtzmann has said that the two prologues are parallel. We willingly accept his opinion, since he must then of necessity allow that St. Luke drew the sketch which St. John elaborated.

We cannot, however, say that St. John in his prologue has affirmed his belief in the miraculous conception by making any formal mention of it.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> We know that the principal writers of the second century, Justin, Irenæus, Tertullian, and perhaps Hippolytus, connected v. 13 with the "Word": "(in His name) who was born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." This reading was in some measure the Catholic text of the second century, since it was known and accepted in the principal churches of Palestine, in Asia, and in the West, and our present canonical text was regarded by Tertullian as a Valentinian correction. In any case, textual criticism will never explain by what chance that reading disappeared, and a reading called heretical became canonical, and has been substituted for it in all manuscripts and versions. (One manuscript alone has preserved the so-called primitive reading, the *Codex Veronensis*.) We

Some orthodox writers<sup>1</sup> make use of the discussion between St. John and Cerinthus to maintain that the author of the fourth gospel not only believed in the supernatural birth, but was one of its first apologists. We give this argument as merely probable; it has not, in our judgment, that certainty which is sometimes attributed to it. No doubt Cerinthus, denying the reality of the Incarnation, did assign to Jesus a purely human origin; but this is only of secondary importance after all, since the Incarnation is not founded upon the miraculous conception, and does not actually require it. The apostle's object principally was to establish the truth that the union of the Word with the human nature was substantial, and he might, therefore, have left the question of the miraculous birth unconsidered. It has also been pointed out with justice that St. John constantly depreciated the natural birth, systematically opposing to it the birth in the spirit, and that he could consequently hardly have attributed to Jesus a purely human origin. This inquiry need not delay us longer. Let it suffice to state that John's disciples, those who inherited the Asiatic tradition, and all who drew from his gospel their doctrine and inspiration, believed without reserve in the virgin birth.

refer the reader to the remarkable studies of Loisy on the prologue to the fourth gospel (*Revue d'histoire et de littérature religieuse*, tome ii.). The defence of the reading of St. Irenæus is there presented at length and with skill. Observe that Holtzmann only rejects it because it contains the precise formula of the miraculous conception, and is thus in contradiction with what he calls the belief of the evangelist.

<sup>1</sup> Gore, *Dissertations on Subjects Connected with the Incarnation*, 1896, p. 8.

## III

We now resume the study of St. Luke, in order to understand the historical value of his writings. The gospel, we have said, is the message of the Kingdom of God, or, more truly, the Kingdom of God as announced and realised by Jesus. It begins with the baptism. Would not a Christian, who had heard an apostle recounting to him the *logia* of our Lord, some of the miracles, and His death and resurrection, feel a proper curiosity to inquire into the childhood and youth of the Lord? He would wish to know what were the antecedents of a man who, suddenly, at the age of thirty, declares Himself to be the Messiah, and does the works of the Messiah; who calls Himself, and allows Himself to be called, the envoy of God; who presents Himself before the world with the exalted claim to be more than all the prophets His forerunners, higher than the angels, the Son of God. This seems to us to have been the attitude of that Theophilus to whom St. Luke addresses his two books. This disciple had evidently asked the companion of St. Paul for first-hand and precise information on the early life of Jesus and the origin of the Church.

Now St. Luke declares to Theophilus in his prologue, which is a clear and calm statement written in classical Greek, that he has examined and verified

all the events (*παρηκολουθηκότι, πᾶσιν*) which he narrates; he has gone into the past (*ἄνωθεν*) as far as possible, and made his inquiries with care (*ἀκριβῶς*). His object is to write methodically and in order (*καθηξῆς*), so that his correspondent may know, and in a way be himself able to test (*ἐπεγνῶς τὴν ἀσφάλειαν*), the truth of the things in which he has been instructed. He then enters at once upon the marvellous history of the annunciation and nativity. Would it not be a piece of bitter irony if this writer had repeated fables accepted without criticism, in order to confirm the faith of an "important" neophyte?

That the facts which constitute the Gospel of the Infancy were derived from a Hebrew or Aramaic document is beyond dispute. Now the book of the Acts enables us to judge of the competency of St. Luke to make use of documents. Nearly all the critics are in accord in admitting the primitive character of the matter preserved at the beginning of that book. They dwell with satisfaction upon the sobriety of the christology and the rare occurrence of the marvellous; nor do they deny to the author a certain historical sense. The journal of his travels shows that he knew how to observe. He is a careful witness and an exact reporter; he sees with precision and he sees everything; his is not the eye of a visionary. Though Greek by birth and training, he has managed to rid his imagination of the graceful, and sometimes terrible, myths which the sight of the sea and the islands would have suggested to con-

temporaries as cultivated as himself, and who would have been accounted more sceptical than he. He even excludes from his narrative all those divine interventions to which the poets, and even religious historians, so readily lend their faith. The sea journey and arrival of his master at Rome was anything but a triumphal progress, and the account of it is not that of a man who bothers his head about the marvellous. Could we ask for more solid human guaranty? Is there not, then, a well-founded presumption in favour of the truth of those first events of the life of Jesus, which the evangelist declares he has verified with care and thoroughness? Has any historian, however critical he may be, the right to set them aside with contempt?

What, then, are the grounds for suspecting the truth of the record? Two chief reasons are alleged: (1) The accounts of St. Matthew and St. Luke contradict and mutually exclude one another, especially as regards the adoration of the wise men and the flight into Egypt. (2) The genealogies are not only different, but they bear evident traces of systematic alteration.

Before undertaking to examine these difficulties, it is necessary to describe the historical method of St. Luke. The existence of certain gaps and omissions in St. Luke's writings used to be, and still is, explained by motives of economic reserve,<sup>1</sup> which

<sup>1</sup> Resch, *Das Kindheitsevangelium nach Lucas und Matthäus quellen-kritisch untersucht*, p. 22 et seq.

motives are sometimes understood in a very material sense. The appeal to such motives of reserve not only neglects certain important omissions, but it must itself submit to the interpretation of a wider and more fundamental law. These omissions can only be justified and explained by reference to the evangelist's literary method, the key to which may be found in the book of the Acts. This book is a true historical composition, the parts of which are well arranged and depend on one another. The advance and spread of Christianity seems chiefly to engage the writer's thoughts. Through his eyes we see the gospel penetrate into the midst of the Hellenist Jews in Jerusalem, and we witness the first evangelising of different regions of Palestine. Passing beyond the narrow boundaries of Judaism, he looks constantly towards the Greek world, be it Syrian, Asiatic or Hellenist; then Rome itself takes possession of his thoughts, and his work comes to an end with the apostle's arrival in Italy. His wish has been to show us how, and under what circumstances, the Christian preaching cut itself free and escaped from the environment of Palestine, spread beyond Jerusalem, and reached even to the capital of the Empire. St. Luke then weighs, not so much the intrinsic importance of each event, as its special value in view of the general advance of Christianity. So that certain important facts, not falling distinctly within the angle of his vision, will either be shortened or even passed over altogether. Other



facts again will assume under his hand a quite different aspect ; he has not, for example, brought out clearly the passionate discussions of the Council of Jerusalem ; he has toned down the vivacity of his master and has retained one main fact : the perfect accord of the apostles, and how that accord was favourable to the progress of the faith among the pagans.

It is not difficult for those who know the scheme of his gospel to identify in it the same structural method. How did the Messiah, who appeared first in Galilee, come to Jerusalem ? The writer's thoughts are constantly turned towards Jerusalem, where the "assumption of the Son of man" was to be accomplished. The "order" of his gospel, then, is not, before everything else, as has been too often and too uniformly said, a chronological order ; it would be more accurately described as a geographical order, or an order of gradual expansion of ideas. We know how free he is in regard to any chronological order. He appears unaware of the numerous journeys undertaken by Jesus on the occasion of feasts. He either does not know, or omits to mention, that the preaching of the Messiah did not come suddenly to Jerusalem, and that the Holy City had been already visited and thrilled by many miracles and many discourses ; that Jesus had been several times through Samaria, preparing it for the good news. To all appearance he was aware of these facts, and yet he has constructed his gospel as though he were not,

dividing the apostolate of Jesus into three periods: the Galilean, the extra-Galilean, and that of Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> Now this literary method, which justifies omissions apparently serious, is found in due proportion in the Gospel of the Infancy. It is difficult to believe that St. Luke was without knowledge of the adoration of the wise men and the flight into Egypt, for these were important episodes; but they were outside his scheme, and he set them deliberately aside, and left them out altogether. To him the life of the Infant Jesus appeared as a beautiful moral and legal unity; it was passed quietly in peaceful Galilee; it was a calm, secluded life of obedience to parents and submission to the law. And just as the evangelist could construct his narrative without finding a place for the journey to Tyre and Sidon, just as he distributed the incidents of the life of Jesus according to the geographical order to the disadvantage of the chronological, so he recounts the nativity and makes no mention of the flight into Egypt, and closes the story as though this fact did not exist for him. He makes use of his rights as an historian, and we must respect them. If the Catholic writers seem blameworthy

<sup>1</sup> We need not then be surprised at his suppression of the journey to Tyre and Sidon, and the incident of the woman of Canaan, two facts which fall, indeed, within his doctrinal plan, within the scope of his thesis, but not within his literary plan. After the multiplication of bread he suddenly quits St. Mark. One might say he was in a hurry to get the Saviour out of Galilee and set Him on the road to Jerusalem. Twice, at short intervals, he makes ready for this departure by mentioning the foretelling of the Passion, which is the true cause of Jesus setting out for Jerusalem. Cf. ix. 22; 44, 51.

in striving to prove a complete harmony, the critics are not less so when they make too much of dissimilarities, in order to deny the historical value of the gospels.

It does not enter into the strict scope of this work to state and discuss the question of the genealogies. We make no new attempt at a harmony; besides, the critics insist less upon the want of accord between the two lists than upon the systematic retouching by which they were completely distorted. Were the primitive genealogies really rehandled and modified by St. Matthew? Did they state that Joseph was (as it was supposed) the father of Jesus, and that Jesus was the son of Joseph? We do not hesitate to say that they did; yet this fact is in no way prejudicial to our thesis.<sup>1</sup>

Each family kept its register of births, in which were written the names of the father and the first-

<sup>1</sup> Our opinion is that St. Luke's is the genealogy of Mary. Bernard Weiss, who also supports this interpretation, thus punctuates the Greek text: *ὡν υἱός, ὃς ἐνομιζέτο Ἰωσήφ, τοῦ Ἠλίου* (*Das Neue Testament*. Handausgabe I.). He was supposed to be the son of Joseph, but in reality He was the son of Heli, the father of Mary. It seems to us that in St. Luke's view Joseph has no place at all, that he is excluded from the genealogy. To the evangelist, recording, as he does, the virgin conception with so much detail, Jesus is the son of Mary. Greek himself, writing for Greeks, the genealogy of Joseph mattered little to him. It would have been otherwise if his gospel had been intended for Israelites. What is more, he affirms that Jesus is really the son of David (xviii. 38). Now, he could not conceive the Davidic descent of Jesus otherwise than through the Davidic descent of Mary, since the blood of the royal ancestor was transmitted to the Saviour by His mother. He was bound, therefore, to establish this latter genealogy.

born. Jesus must have been registered as the son of Joseph in the official and quasi-notarial family document. It could not have been otherwise. Joseph was supposed to be the father of Jesus, so that the primitive genealogies which the contemporaries of Jesus were able to consult show Him to have been the firstborn of Joseph the carpenter and Mary. The mystery of the Supernatural Conception was not known to the people of Nazareth and Capharnaum, nor to the near relations of Jesus. There is nothing astounding, therefore, in the fact that Mary was looked upon by the Galileans as a woman like other women, a mother like other mothers. The Supernatural Conception was, as all the critics have said, a well-kept secret, known only to a privileged few. Besides, it would not have been accepted by those in whose midst Mary and Jesus lived ; it would have troubled the minds of even their most intimate friends. As to the crowd, whom the words of Jesus offend, who, in spite of wonders and benefits received, show themselves mistrustful in regard to the Messianic mission, and often enough even hostile, they would *a fortiori* have refused to believe in an unexampled wonder like a miraculous birth. To have divulged such a secret would have been not only useless, but imprudent and dangerous. And this supposition is not without justification ; for later, when the belief in the Supernatural Conception had become public and universal, the Jews published a defamatory libel upon the birth of Jesus, alike dis-

honouring to mother and Son. Since these attacks were not made during the lifetime of our Lord and His mother, it is permissible to conclude with Resch that the secret was respected, and not revealed until after the death of Mary; it would appear that it was she who made it known to the disciples. The genealogies came into the hands of Matthew and Luke in their primitive state; they explained and rectified them. Had they not the right to do so?<sup>1</sup>

It is time to finish this investigation of the two difficulties which the critics propose. As to the first, the historical method of St. Luke and his literary scheme sufficiently explain why he left out of his narrative the flight into Egypt, as though such a fact had never taken place. We allow, with regard

<sup>1</sup> It is generally admitted that the Sinaitic Syriac text is not perfectly pure, that the scribe believed not only in the supernatural conception, but also in the perpetual virginity of Mary, who is presented as the Virgin *κατ' ἐξοχήν*. (1) Joseph, to whom is affianced Mary the Virgin, will engender Jesus (a naïve combination of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, as Holtzmann justly remarks). (2) It gives an account of the anguish of Joseph. (3) It cuts out v. 25 of St. Matthew, because, according to the writer's exegesis, the evangelist's remark would exclude the virginity of Mary. Whence comes this reading? It cannot be the primitive text of St. Matthew, since apart from some evidently retouched Latin manuscripts, it is alone, and cannot stand against the unanimity of the Greek texts and the versions. It seems to us impossible that the scribe should have introduced it of his own accord, for he seems to us rather afraid of a discovery troubling to his orthodoxy. On the other hand, it is not to be accounted for by any work of the official genealogist, anxious to harmonise the facts known about the birth of Jesus with those of His royal ancestors. He must, consequently, have found an Ebionite genealogy, or rather, we should say, the primitive official, legal genealogy, preserved in an Ebionite milieu.

to the other, that the primitive genealogies were officially drawn up as though Joseph had been the father of Jesus, but we hold that St. Luke, having been made aware of the "blessed mystery," would have retouched and corrected them according to this belief. We can now begin the analysis of St. Luke's account.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Some critics conclude from verses 33, 41, 48 of chapter ii., in which Joseph is called the father of Jesus, that one of the sources consulted by St. Luke rejected the Supernatural Conception. This hypothesis does not appear to us well founded. The Christian belief is manifest from the whole trend of the Gospel of the Infancy. Mary it is who, contrary to all Hebrew use, appears alone upon the scene. While Zachary receives the celestial promise of the birth of a son, while he himself hymns the opening of the Messianic era and the destiny of John, Joseph plays not the smallest part in the mystery of Jesus. Mary is entirely in the foreground; to her the angel addresses himself; the prophecy of Zachary has to do with her; she speaks to the child found in the temple. Joseph says nothing; he keeps in the background. His position in the family is that of guardian, the supporter of Mary, the protector of Jesus. The child makes His appearance as the Son of His mother. He reserves the title of Father for God.

We remark, also, that all these facts are impressed with the sentiment of the perpetual virginity of Mary. The child, we have said, is the Son of His mother; He is also her only son. Women were not bound to make the Paschal pilgrimage. The onus of maternity, the care of small children, kept them at home, especially when they lived far from Jerusalem. The evangelist states that Joseph and Mary went every year to Jerusalem, according to the usage of the feast (v. 42). When Jesus is twelve years old the mother is again found in the Holy City. The house at Nazareth was then empty. There was nothing to keep Mary at home.



## IV

There have been some who have admired the dogmatic progress of the idea of the Supernatural Conception which Holtzmann has sketched: namely, that the doctrine cannot have developed on Jewish soil; that conditions favourable to the germs gathered from the Old Testament could only have been found in the Greek world; that it is there the belief succeeded in taking root, and was able to fructify and grow. This hypothesis could only be true so far as the evangelical narrative was Greek in spirit and language. But it is incontestable that the document which St. Luke used was the composition of a Jew, and, indeed, of a Palestinian Jew.

What its first pages describe are in reality biblical scenes, and they carry us at once into the midst of Jewish fervour and into the serene and traditional solemnity of the sacrifices. They show us how uprightness, purity, and peace could be inspired in simple hearts by the law, the temple, and the ceremonies. The religious ideal we encounter has not passed the line dividing the Old from the New Testament. Holiness is only to be found in obedience to the commandments and precepts of Yahweh, in the performance of prescribed rites, in the regular pilgrimage of the people to the mountain of Sion, to present themselves before the Lord. The extra-

ordinary tension of souls, tormented by Messianic hopes since the time of Isaias, reveals itself in this last period. All Israel is waiting for the near coming of Yahweh; and Zacharias hails His rising, "the dayspring upon the mountains,"<sup>1</sup> destined to illuminate and make resplendent. Jesus, a child, appears led by the same ideal of moral life, and of a life of ritual observance; his youth seems, as it were, taken hold of by the requirements of the law. The temple is yet standing, one would suppose that it was eternal; there is no mention of the threats which had been pronounced; they are passed over in silence. There is not a page of the New Testament which is marked by so clear and so characteristic a Hebrew note. Only a Palestine Jew could have written these pages. From the way in which he describes his characters and narrates their lives, it is evident that he has known these festival days and has tasted their charm, and that they have been his ideal and remained his ideal notwithstanding the new belief. He must also have written his story before the destruction of Jerusalem, and when the catastrophe was still far off and not in any way foreseen. It is impossible to concede that St. Luke was the original author, and that he tried to form his style in imitation of the Hebrew, using the Septuagint as a model. Nothing warrants the belief that he was capable of a subtlety such that he succeeded in making the Aramaic tongue and idiom and the rhythmic movement of its poetry his own.

<sup>1</sup> Ἀνατολή ἐξ ὄψεως, i. 78.

Moreover, what could have induced him to lend himself to so deliberate a literary *tour de force*, but the wish to deceive his readers?

Some critics still persist in defending the above-named hypothesis of Holtzmann, but they reach his conclusion by another road. They admit both the Jewish inspiration of the narrative and the Hebrew character of the language, and, consequently, the Palestinian origin of the document. They, however, reject the verses 34 and 35 as, in their opinion, not having formed part of the primitive source; the Supernatural Conception, which the Palestinian document knew nothing of, must have been introduced by St. Luke himself. We are not sorry, for our part, to observe the procedure, we might almost say, *expedients* to which the negative criticism is reduced when it suppresses what it should explain; when, being unable to untie the knot, it does not hesitate to cut it.

We should have to admit an ingenuity, and that ingenuity not over-scrupulous, on the part of St. Luke, if he is to be accounted the author of those fragments of the gospel in which the Hebraic accent and rhythm are so pronounced, and we should have to charge him with having had recourse deliberately to vulgar artifices of style. Who does not see that Mary's perplexed question is a parallel to Zachary's; that the reply made to her, the sign given her, correspond to the reply and to the sign of the preceding incident; that the story of the Infancy without the

Supernatural Conception would be mutilated; a pyramid without its top, an arch without its key-stone.

Moreover, it cannot be denied that the birth of John the Baptist was only announced as a prelude to the annunciation of Jesus; that the promise that he should be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb was only made in view of the higher and direct action of the Holy Spirit in the conception of the Holy One of God.<sup>1</sup> "If saints like the Baptist," says Holtzmann, "are filled with the Spirit from their mothers' wombs, the Holy One of God is considered as a creation of the Holy Spirit within the womb of His mother." Without the Supernatural Conception, the Visitation, closely following the Annunciation, is inexplicable. Why does Mary visit her cousin if not to see the sign promised her by the angel? What is the meaning of Elizabeth's burst of enthusiasm at the sight of the mother of her "Lord," except that she had some supernatural knowledge of the mystery of Nazareth?<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lagrange, *Revue Biblique*, 1<sup>er</sup> Avril, 1895, p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> It is objected that verse 35 is a useless repetition of verse 32. In the latter the name of "Son of the Most High" is "a Messianic title," "a theocratic style." In verse 35 the divine Sonship seems based on the supernatural conception; *because* He is born of the Spirit He shall be called the Son of God. We think that in the annunciation of the supernatural conception the stress is not upon the words Son of God. This view is supported by all parallel examples. Wherever κληθήσεται is found the qualificative precedes the verb. So ἅγιόν τῷ κυρίῳ κληθή (ii. 22); Ναζωραίος κληθή (Matt. ii. 23); υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται (v. 9), etc. (See Plummer, *Gospel According to St. Luke*, p. 25). It seems to me

## V

Let us for a moment suppose that the purely human birth of Jesus had been the primitive belief, not only of the Palestinian community which was administered by the brothers of the Lord, but that it was preached and propagated by all the apostles, by St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. John, in all the churches of the Empire. In this case the belief would have been of necessity predominant everywhere during the first century, and the historian should find it firmly established in the second ; after that, however,

that one might properly translate : " This is why the being to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God " ; by which means the second qualificative is reduced to its place in apposition. We cannot understand how serious professors persist in attributing to the Holy Spirit sexual co-operation. The Spirit of God and the power of God are identical terms, and explain one another ; the Holy Spirit co-operates in so far as He is the power of God. A discussion of the action of the power of God as a masculine or feminine principle is, to say the least, better suited to some ancient Rabbis. We find in the Acts (i. 8) the mention of the Holy Spirit descending upon the apostles described in the same terms as in the account of the Infancy : ἀλλὰ λήψεσθε δύναμιν ἐπελθόντος τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐφ' ὑμᾶς. Cf. ἐπελεύσεται ἐπὶ σέ. In our opinion it seems established, from the critical point of view, that the announcement of the supernatural conception formed part of the primitive Palestine document. It was consequently in Jewish surroundings that this belief first took root and was in the first instance accepted. Moreover, if we weigh the difficulties which stood in the way of the formation of the dogma (difficulties upon which our adversaries rightly insist), we must conclude that it is no spontaneous product of popular imagination and of theological speculation, but that it imposed itself upon the Christian conscience as an undeniable fact.

little by little, and not without resistance, the belief should be seen to disappear, in consequence of the spread of the gospel of St. Luke. But the second century really gives us quite another picture, and reveals to us the churches under a totally different aspect. All the Christian communities founded by the apostles at this time believe in the virgin birth, looking upon it as a fundamental and ancient belief. An explicit text of St. Ignatius, as it were, opens the series of testimonies. "The virginity of Mary, her parturition, and the death of the Lord; three mysteries widely preached which have been accomplished in the silence of God."<sup>1</sup> In this clear way the holy martyr expresses himself. It must be borne in mind that his episcopate began with the second century, that he was the disciple of the apostles, and was the bishop of Antioch, that is, the great Apostolic Metropolitan. He had already collected the principal epistles of St. Paul; he was one of the first readers of the gospel of St. John, and he regarded the virgin birth, the passion, and the resurrection as the three important moments in the life of Jesus. This dogma of the virgin birth does not seem to have come to him as a novelty, as a recent belief substituted for a primitive belief; as far back as his memory could carry him, the virgin birth was for him an established

<sup>1</sup> *To the Ephesians*, xix. : ἡ παρθενία Μαρίας καὶ ὁ τοκετὸς αὐτῆς, ὁμοίως καὶ ὁ θάνατος τοῦ κυρίου. τρία μυστήρια κραυγῆς ἅτινα ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ θεοῦ ἐπράχθη. Cf. *ad Smyrnaeos*, i. ; *ad Trallianos*, ix.



fact, as incontestable and as historical as the passion and the resurrection.

In the same way the Supernatural Conception appears as one of the principal articles of the Athenian Symbolum. The striking events of our Lord's life, according to the *Apology* of Aristides,<sup>1</sup> are His birth of a virgin, His crucifixion by the Jews, His death and burial, His resurrection and ascension. It holds a similar place in St. Justin's profession of faith,<sup>2</sup> and Justin was a witness, not only to the tradition of Palestine, but also to that of Rome and Ephesus.

Irenæus<sup>3</sup> was the last of the series of witnesses belonging to the second century, which opens with Ignatius. Summing up the faith of the churches of East and West, he refers to the virgin birth side by side with the passion and the resurrection. So, then, at Antioch, in Asia, in Achaïa, at Rome, and in Palestine, the supernatural birth is found associated with the facts of the passion and the resurrection. It is put on an equality with these, if not in point of importance, at least in point of certainty. Is not the unanimous, universal consent which we find in all the apostolic churches proof incontestable that the dogma itself is of apostolic origin? To admit with the critics that the apostles were not aware of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Resch, *op. cit.*, p. 295 ss. The primitive text as restored by Harnack will be found there.

<sup>2</sup> *Dialogue*, 85. *Apology*, 31, 46.

<sup>3</sup> *Contra hæreses*, I. x. 1.

the Supernatural Conception, or rejected it, and that they preached the contrary belief; and then at the beginning of the second century to find all the great churches calmly assured of the miraculous birth, would bring us face to face with a phenomenal contradiction which would be unique. In order to explain so sudden a solution of continuity and a cleavage so distinct, we should be forced to appeal to a miracle in history.

To this tradition there is opposed a contrary current, which made itself felt in the Judæo-Christian churches down to the fifth century, namely, Ebionism. From it we must first separate Cerinthus, with whom St. John came into conflict. According to Irenæus<sup>1</sup> Cerinthus was a Jew, trained up in Greek philosophy, adapted to the religious beliefs of the East; he taught that whatever was matter and body was of necessity impure. He distinguished, then, between Jesus the man and the Son of God; and, denying that the union of the two natures was substantial and real, he was led to the conclusion that Jesus had been born according to the ordinary law of generation. As has been said very justly,<sup>2</sup> he does not reject the virgin birth in the name of tradition, but on the strength of philosophical postulates; his negation of it was required by his negation of the principle of the Incarnation.

We may also detach from simple Ebionism the

<sup>1</sup> *Contra hæreses*, I. xxvi. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Gore, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

gnostic Ebionites who apparently read the gospel of the Twelve Apostles,<sup>1</sup> and the Nazarene Ebionites. These two groups accepted the Supernatural Conception ; it is with the original sect alone that we are now occupied. Saint Justin describes the Ebionites proper, Christians of Jewish origin, as the unremitting adversaries of the virgin birth. The divergence can be explained in one of two ways. Either the Ebionite belief was primitive, and had been faithfully preserved and maintained by them, or else they had once shared the common belief, and at some unknown turning-point in their history had become violently sundered from the other churches.

In what sense could their belief be primitive, that is to say, representative of the ancient faith? They could have the ancient belief only in virtue of having been disciples from the earliest time, when the virginal conception was a mystery, and the genealogies set forth that Jesus was the son of Joseph. It had long been a sufficient qualification for baptism to believe that Jesus was the Messiah. In any case we should have to admit that they became separated at a very early date from the Palestinian community, since the original Gospel of the Infancy was composed before the destruction of Jerusalem, and belief in the Supernatural Conception was already spread abroad. Again, this sect cannot be accepted as representing the true faith of the Judæo-Christians. The mass of the community remained orthodox, and

<sup>1</sup> Gore, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

if, later, it cut itself off from the great Church, the breach was never so wide as that of simple Ebionism. These two considerations diminish, in our opinion, the probability of the first alternative.

The testimony of Hegesippus, on the contrary, seems to give the second alternative a great historical value. This writer, an orthodox Judæo-Christian, states that the Church of Jesus remained a pure and immaculate virgin down to the time of Trajan. "Those who forced themselves to corrupt the true standard of the gospel took good care to hide themselves in obscurity; but when the generation of those who had heard the divine wisdom became extinct, their conspiracy and impious error burst forth into the light of day." Hegesippus, then, knew of a turning-point in the history of the Palestinian churches; he knew that a religious revolution, slowly and silently prepared, had broken out on the death of the last disciple of Jesus. Would it be rash to regard Ebionism as having taken its origin at that time?

However this may be, from the point of view of history, the importance of this small sect appears quite secondary. It is only one limb of little value severed from the great Judæo-Christian community. If its faith was ever the primitive faith, it is to blame for not having completed and vivified it with the evangelical riches which little by little came to light. Perhaps, and indeed very probably, its error was only a relapse; a simple return to the Messianic ideas of Pharisaic Judaism.

We have passed the proposed limits of our inquiry, and it may be thought that we have developed literary criticism too exclusively ; but if it be remembered that the liberal school affects to restrict itself to literary criticism, it will be understood that our task lies principally in that direction. It seems to us that for a sincere and really independent thinker the rationalistic thesis lacks all historical support, and that we are not bound to recognise in the gospel of St. Mark, or in the preaching of St. Luke and St. John, any primitive belief which excludes the virgin birth. An impartial examination of the different writings does not authorise this conclusion. This we claim to have established.

It seems to us also incontestable that the dogma of the Supernatural Conception did not come from the Greek churches ; the belief originated in Palestine ; for the primitive document can only be from Palestine. J. Weiss's suggestion to erase from the document the words of the angel announcing the action of the Holy Spirit, is in reality a withdrawal from the discussion, and a method, as it were, of covering a defeat. The rich tradition of the second century sheds a brilliant light upon the faith of the first ; to find the belief in the Supernatural Conception alive and unanimous in all the churches founded by the apostles is the best proof that the belief itself is of apostolic origin. We must not then isolate the accounts of the Infancy from the body of the gospel, or regard them as belonging to a later cycle of independent formation

and less historical value. The life of Jesus is integral ; it is a whole from which we may subtract nothing. We believe that the Messianic manifestation of Jesus was prepared by supernatural antecedents, that the carpenter of Nazareth did not step forth suddenly as the Messiah and the Son of God.

Sabatier concluded his study on the conversion of St. Paul by saying that the question cannot be fully solved if taken by itself alone. "It is bound up," he says, "in an indissoluble way with that of the resurrection of Jesus Christ itself. The solution to be given to the former depends upon the solution which has been given to the latter. He who accepts the resurrection of the Saviour would be ill-advised to cast doubt upon His apparition to His apostles ; but he who, without any examination, is fully persuaded that there is no God, or that if there is He never interferes in human affairs, he no doubt will reject both facts and take refuge in the hypothesis of visions, though that were even more improbable. The problem, then, is transported from the historical to the metaphysical order, whither we cannot pursue it." <sup>1</sup> Such to us appears the case with the accounts of the Infancy and the supernatural events which they describe : the virgin conception, the angelic apparitions. We have seen that the critics propose improbable hypotheses, and that they agree in one

<sup>1</sup> *St. Paul*, 1891, p. 51.



thing only, in denying *a priori* the reality of these events. Is not this because they are convinced that God either does not exist, or does not intervene in human affairs? Our task is over with the historical and critical inquiry; we have not to pursue the problem further.

### III

## THE KINGDOM OF GOD

THE subject of this chapter is the Kingdom of God. Its design is to examine the work of Jesus Christ before inquiring whence came His conscious knowledge of being the Son of God, which was the cause of His lofty religious aspirations, and which animated His spirit as the Messiah. In the synoptic gospels He first appears as the messenger of this kingdom. It is in announcing it that He gathers crowds about Him, and attaches His disciples to Him. He founds the kingdom: it is His first work and His chief work, before which His personality seems to efface itself. This is the explanation of the position of the present chapter.

After Malachias, that is, for three or four centuries, no prophet was heard in Israel. There still existed the temple, served by the Sadducee; the synagogue where the Pharisee prayed, read the law, and went forth to mutter his invectives against the political and sacerdotal power. The desert, from the oasis of En-gaddi to the mouth of the Jordan, was peopled by ascetics, by those who were weary of the material sacrifices and the minute observances

required by the scribes : these, as it were, divided the souls of men among them, and ministered to their different religious wants.

“And in those days cometh John the Baptist preaching in the desert of Jordan, and saying : Do penance, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”<sup>1</sup> ἡγγικεν γὰρ ἡ βασιλεῖα τῶν οὐρανῶν. The phrase stirs up the people, and the three gospels speak with enthusiasm and emphasis of the uninterrupted procession of Jews, of all sects and grades, going out to the desert to ask baptism from John, and to inquire what were the conditions of entry into the Kingdom of Heaven. Jerusalem is emptied,<sup>2</sup> and all Judæa takes the road towards Jericho, to quarters on the banks of the river.

The Kingdom of God is near, but it is to be inaugurated by a severe judgment, which will absolutely exclude the sinner. John is preaching and baptising in order to prepare Israel, to awaken its conscience, to recall hearts to their allegiance, in anticipation of “the wrath to come.”<sup>3</sup>

The judgment is at hand, and the prophet insists upon its imminence ; he warns his followers to be converted, and terrifies them with the boldness of his similes. To the crowds huddled together upon the river banks, scattered in the thorny hollows, or among

<sup>1</sup> Matthew iii. 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Mark i. 5 ; Πᾶσα ἡ Ἰουδαία χώρα καὶ οἱ Ἱεροσολομεῖται πάντες, Matthew iii. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew iii. 7 ; Luke iii. 7.

the clumps of trees through which the mysterious Jordan flows, he says, "For now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that doth not yield good fruit shall be cut down, and cast into the fire."<sup>1</sup> They ask if it is he who will preside at this judgment, if he is the Messiah; he answers that it is another, greater than he, who comes after him. John reiterates the retributive character of the mission of that other. If He gives the baptism of the spirit, He will also cast into the fire. "Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly cleanse His floor; and gather His wheat into the barn, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire."<sup>2</sup>

That is the object of John the Baptist's preaching; that is his gospel. The time of the Kingdom of Heaven, when God will Himself take the government of the world, is come; the first act which opens the Messianic era is at hand; this is the judgment, woe to him who is behindhand.

For to everyone who reads John's words aright, and does not seek to find in them merely a moral exhortation, which would be to give them a diminished, an adapted, and forced sense, it is evident that the man of God, if his mission was to foretell the coming of the Messiah and to "prepare His ways before Him," had no notion of marking the stages of the Messiah's activity or of distinguishing its phases. With him, as with the prophets, his pre-

<sup>1</sup> Matthew iii. 10; Luke iii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew iii. 12; Luke iii. 17.

decessors and models, whose line he continues, the spiritual work of the Messiah was what he calls the washing in the spirit. The judgment of the Messiah which he depicts as immersion in fire, the purging of the threshing-floor and the felling of the sterile trees, in a word, the universal sovereignty of God and the final triumph of the just, all appears to him to be close at hand. From this point of view his vision of the future is still indistinct; he seems not to know the order in which the events are to occur, nor at what intervals the different parts of the prophecy are to be fulfilled.

Then Jesus appears, and His first utterance is the very words of John: "ἡγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν";<sup>1</sup> the formula which He gives His twelve disciples, when their mission as apostles begins, is still that of John: "ἡγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν."<sup>2</sup> Was His conception of the kingdom of Heaven, and of the times of that kingdom, the same as St. John's? Was knowledge of those times denied to Him, as it was to the Precursor, or did He indeed throw light upon St. John's obscure perception of events? Was it His office to develop the prophecy of St. John and go beyond it? Such is the problem to be studied by those who would find out what the kingdom of God was which Jesus preached and founded, and which constitutes the whole of His Gospel.

The examination of this essential standpoint of

<sup>1</sup> Matthew iv. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew x. 7.

the synoptic gospels is rendered important by certain recent publications. Many critics, especially the more recent, assert that Jesus, the follower of the prophets and of John the Baptist, given up particularly to the reading of the Apocrypha of the Old Testament and the Apocalypses which, from the book of Daniel onwards, were the most popular form of writing, never freed Himself from these heterogeneous influences, nor in any way surpassed His predecessors. He entered into the very soul of His people ; He shared their national aspirations ; with them He looked for a kingdom of God which was to descend from Heaven, a kingdom where happiness would consist in the triumph of Israel over its enemies, in an abundance of the good things of this earth, with long life, and a youth continually renewed. And that they say was what He preached : the kingdom He announced as near at hand was no other than the "new heaven and new earth" of the Apocalypses, in the most material and Jewish sense of the word. Such is the opinion of Stapfer among others. He writes :<sup>1</sup> "There is nothing to show that Jesus understood the kingdom of Heaven differently from His contemporaries ; there is no authority for putting in His mouth other language than that used by the doctors of His people. If on this important point of doctrine Jesus had had any but contemporary ideas, He would have said so ; He would have

<sup>1</sup> *Jésus-Christ pendant son ministère*, 1897, pp. 153, 154.



taken trouble to distinguish His way of seeing things from that of His people. When speaking privately to any of His apostles, He would have been careful to dispel any misunderstanding. He would have warned them, enlightened them, and put them on their guard. He never did anything of the kind. And not only did He never warn them, but, on the contrary, He made use of all the expressions of His contemporaries, repeated them as they stood, accepting the sense attributed to them by all. To say that Jesus spoke in another sense, a spiritual, allegorical, and symbolical sense, is an entirely arbitrary assertion. Those who heard Jesus would not have understood any language He used about the kingdom which was to come in any sense other than that used by everyone, unless it had been accompanied by plain and explicit explanations distinguishing the two notions. But the gospels show no trace whatsoever of any explanations of the kind."

We have transcribed this page, in which the writer gives his firm conviction and the proofs by which he supports it. It presents the problem succinctly and fully ; its importance is undeniable. The matter is reduced to a very simple question : What did Jesus give humanity? If the kingdom He foretells be no other than the Jewish chimera, the dream of the Apocrypha and the Apocalypses which marred the conception of the prophets ; if the near approach of that kingdom was distinctly before His mind, guiding His thought as the motive of the moral precepts,

which he pronounced in the Sermon on the Mount, was He not deceiving Himself? Has He not deceived us? Doubtless His personality, through the heroism of His life, the purity and depth of His religious consciousness, will continue to demand respect; many of His utterances will remain with all their value when earth and heaven have passed away; but the cruel contradiction which events have given to prophecy, as the critics understand it, destroys for ever the authority of the prophet and envoy of God. Stapfer tries to protect himself against this conclusion, and to safeguard his religious belief by saying: "Let us believe in Jesus; do not let us believe like Jesus." This distinction does not seem logical. Renan's complete negation was preferable.

What we desire to establish is that the expression, "kingdom of Heaven," is complex and comprises two notions, that the sovereignty of God is to be understood of two separate epochs, and as involving two distinct phases, the one initial, the other eschatological or final. Jesus Christ inaugurated and founded the first phase, which was spiritual and invisible, and which could not be otherwise. The second phase will only begin at the last day with the judgment. The Saviour then discarded the popular Messianic conceptions, inasmuch as the kingdom was not national nor political, but universal and spiritual. As the founder of the kingdom, He superseded John the Baptist, who was only its herald and prophet; furthermore, He simplified the obscure

predictions of the Precursor by postponing the prospect of the last judgment to the indefinite future, in order to allow time for the "baptism of the spirit" to be effected.

## I

Like John, as we said, Jesus preached the kingdom of God. He proclaimed from village to village the joyful news that the kingdom was imminent. "Preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying: the time is accomplished and the kingdom of God is at hand."<sup>1</sup> When He withdrew from Capharnaum, after that Sabbath day on which He performed so many miracles, He said to the crowd which followed Him into His retreat and wished to retain Him: "I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also, for to this purpose am I come."<sup>2</sup> The message with which John had aroused all Judæa awakened similar religious and national aspirations when Jesus preached it in the northern parts of Palestine. The kingdom of Heaven was familiar to the people, to whom it represented the sum of all their hopes, which had been so often disappointed, so often shattered, but which had never been so lively as they then were. Before comparing the Jewish conception of the kingdom of

<sup>1</sup> Mark i. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Mark i. 38. Luke iv. 43.

God with the kingdom of God which Jesus preached, we must first explain the terms.

The gospels call the kingdom announced by Jesus Christ "the kingdom of heaven," or "the kingdom of God." The former expression is peculiar to St. Matthew; the latter is uniformly employed by St. Mark and St. Luke; it is used thrice<sup>1</sup> by the first evangelist; in parallel texts where St. Matthew has "kingdom of heaven" the others write "kingdom of God." Which is the primitive formula, the one actually used by Jesus? According to Weiss and Holtzmann,<sup>2</sup> the Saviour used the expression "kingdom of God," and it was only, they maintain, after the destruction of Jerusalem, when the Christians had to abandon all hope of a reign of God on earth that the variant kingdom of Heaven was introduced, in order to emphasise the transcendency, the celestial remoteness of that kingdom. As to St. Matthew, we search his gospel in vain for any more emphatic transference of the kingdom into another sphere; he differs in no way from the other evangelists as to the place of the kingdom of God. We think, with Dalman,<sup>3</sup> that the formula "kingdom of heaven" is primitive. The expression is Jewish; the idea which it evokes is the outcome of Jewish speculations; it was such as the

<sup>1</sup> xii. 28; xxi. 31, 43.

<sup>2</sup> B. Weiss, *Lehrbuch der biblischen Theologie*, 6th edition, p. 580. Holtzmann, *Lehrbuch der Neutest. Theologie*, i. 191.

<sup>3</sup> Dalman, *The Words of Jesus*, p. 93.

Jewish hearers of Jesus were able to understand. It was St. Mark and St. Luke, rather, who would have substituted for the Hebraism "kingdom of heaven" the equivalent "kingdom of God," as more intelligible to the Greek readers for whom they wrote. It is consequently more exact to suppose that the Saviour, speaking to His countrymen, would have habitually employed the formula "kingdom of Heaven."

But is there no shade of meaning missed in the translation "kingdom of God"? Two facts warrant our belief that the one is a perfect and exact equivalent of the other. We have only to observe that St. Mark and St. Luke invariably translate the one by the other, in order to conclude that the first generation of Christians and the apostles, whose disciples the two evangelists were, understood and interpreted the kingdom preached by Jesus Christ as they did. Then we find in the Mischna the word "heaven" frequently used to designate God, whose name was unspeakable, and even the expression "kingdom of Heaven" for "kingdom of God."<sup>1</sup> We do not mean to say that the Saviour had any of the scruples of the devout rabbi; but He would have respected the susceptibilities of His hearers and avoided the use of the name Yahweh. In any case, He commonly used the current expression, and in

<sup>1</sup> In these phrases the word *schamain* is used without the article: *malloth schamain*; *môra schamain*; *schem schamain*; *bide schamain*.

His mind the two formulæ mean one and the same thing.<sup>1</sup>

What is the force of the word *βασιλεία*? All the critics assert that both in the Old Testament and in Jewish literature the word "malkuth," when applied to God, always signifies the royal government of God, and never the kingdom of God. An Oriental empire, to-day as in antiquity, Dalman observes, is not a state comprising a people or a land in our Latin or Anglo-Saxon acceptation, but a dominion, a sovereignty, exercised over a particular territory. The original meaning of *ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ* is not, therefore, the "kingdom of God," but the "sovereignty of God." Jesus, in preaching this *βασιλεία*, announces that God is about to reign as sovereign and absolute master, to assume the government of the world. Those over whom He will exercise this royal sway will form His empire, His state, His kingdom. We think that both significations "sovereignty of God" and "kingdom of God" are found in the gospels, but that the latter is only secondary. We have insisted upon a minute inquiry into the precise meaning of the terms, because it is a misunderstanding of them which, in our opinion, has given rise to an erroneous theory on the subject of the kingdom of God. Certain critics have imagined that, according to Jewish ideas

<sup>1</sup> Dalman says justly (p. 92): "It is not the *βασιλεία* which is described as transcendent, but the *βασιλεύς*. 'Ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν means the sovereignty of the transcendent God.'" If the exact meaning of *βασιλεία* is sovereignty, and not kingdom, the formula "sovereignty of heaven" can only signify "sovereignty of God."



(and consequently the ideas of Jesus Christ), the kingdom of God was already pre-existent and formed in heaven, whence it was expected to descend upon earth. Now it is clear from the analysis which we have made that what Jesus Christ preached could not be anything but the manifestation and unfolding of the omnipotence of God, the effect of which is described as the creation of a kingdom. God alone was pre-existent; the kingdom was to be founded upon earth.

What idea had the contemporaries of the Saviour of this kingdom of God? What was the essential nature of the joy and peace which the Israelite would enjoy when he had been brought once more under the divine obedience? Would the kingdom be temporal or spiritual, national and restricted to the limits of Palestine, or universal and open to every people? We must reply to these questions. Exact information concerning the hopes of Israel in the time of Jesus Christ have been recovered from a variety of sources and arranged with a great deal of success.<sup>1</sup> It is derived specially from certain writings, the date of which is determinable, inasmuch as they are posterior to the Roman occupation, which seem to have had a considerable influence. These are the *Psalms of Solomon*, poems, certainly Palestinian, which at least reflect the

<sup>1</sup> Schürer, *Geschichte des Jüdischen Volkes*, 1898, ii. ¶ 29.

opinions of the hearers of Jesus, even if they did not actually suggest them.<sup>1</sup>

Palestine was subject to Rome. The Sadducees, who subserved the dominant power, had been rewarded with the honours of the priesthood. The writer, a Pharisee and a patriot, sends forth his manifesto, which opens with the solemn invocation: "O Yahweh, Thou who art our King always and forever." He asks Him to raise up a king, according to His promise, a son of David to reign in Israel, to overthrow and annihilate the enemies, and purge Jerusalem of the pagans. This King is to gather about Him a holy people; He will judge the tribes of the nation sanctified by God, and He will not suffer unrighteousness to remain in its midst. He will apportion Palestine to these purified Israelites according to the ancient territorial divisions; no settler, no stranger is to dwell there. The pagans shall serve God and be brought beneath His yoke; from the uttermost parts of the earth they shall come to see the glory of the Lord, bringing with them their enfeebled sons "to see the glory of the Lord, which the Lord will have made to shine." This King is the Messiah, the anointed of the Lord. He shall not put His trust in horses and their riders, for the Lord Himself is His King. God has made Him powerful

<sup>1</sup> It will suffice to analyse cursorily Psalm xvii., the most characteristic and the clearest from the point of view of the national and religious aspirations of Israel. It serves very well as a setting for the information furnished by the other books.

with His *Holy Spirit*; with one word of His mouth He shall smite the earth forever. In those days there shall be no more injustice and uncleanness. The writer concludes by imploring God to make haste to show mercy to His people, and protesting his loyalty to God.

Two features especially concern us in this prediction of the Messianic times: the restoration of the kingdom of Israel, with the place which the pagans will occupy in that kingdom; and, secondly, the nature of the blessings the Israelites will enjoy.

The author awaits with unshaken hope the return of the dispersed Israelites to settle in Palestine, "to inherit the land"; he has a veneration for this land. He seems to have constantly floating before his eyes the vision of Balaam, since he pictures the people already distributed by tribes, according to the division of the soil of their fathers which Moses had made. Palestine, then, is the rallying point of the future theocracy, the centre of this new empire; but the sovereignty of God will break its boundaries and spread beyond them to subdue the unbeliever and destroy the *malkuth* of men.

The conception of the Messianic times and the future sovereignty of God had been broadened and magnified with the extension of the ideas of God, the world, and Israel's political horizon. Since Yahweh is the only God, the Creator of the world, it followed as a consequence that He should reign over all the earth whenever He should decide to reign. In the

author's vision the chosen people come into conflict successively with great empires; its foes are not merely the small Bedouin tribes of Idumæa, Moab, and Ammon. The disturbers of its peace are the kingdoms of Egypt and Syria; then, beyond the Syrian plain, the great dynasties of Nineveh, Babylon, and Susa; then the Greeks, and, last of all, the Romans. The political powers hostile to God and His people must be destroyed; they represent the *malkuth* of men, which has to be crushed by the *malkuth* of God. Such is the first struggle which will result in the foundation of the kingdom of God. The sinful empires having been destroyed, not by "horses and their riders," but by one word from the mouth of the Messiah, in whom dwells the Spirit of God, what is to be the fate of the pagans? They will be converted to Yahweh, and will recognise Him as the true God. Isaias, more than any other,<sup>1</sup> predicted this return and proclaimed the Messiah as the Redeemer of all people. By the mouth of Zacharias<sup>2</sup> God spoke thus to His people: "In those days ten men of all languages of the Gentiles shall lay hold of one that is a Jew by the skirt, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." This universalism is found under different forms in subsequent writers. According to the Sibylline books<sup>3</sup> the pagans, when they shall have

<sup>1</sup> ii. 2 *et seq.*; xi. 10; xlii. 1-6; etc.

<sup>2</sup> viii. 23.

<sup>3</sup> *Oracula Sib.*, iii. 698-726; 766-783.

seen the peace of the people of God, will extol and praise the true God, will send their gifts to the temple at Jerusalem, and walk by the light of the law. Then God will establish His empire over all men; the prophets of God will be their judges. It will be by moral qualities that the saints will conquer the world; to use Philo's words,<sup>1</sup> by dignity, beneficence, and power. According to other writings, the divine power with which the Messiah is invested will be exercised over all men; they will accept it with submission. It is noteworthy that the calling of the Gentiles to the kingdom of God is more developed and has greater prominence in Alexandrian writings than in those of the Jews of Palestine. These latter, having been the victims of the Roman power, often harsh and pitiless, look for the kingdom of God in its aspect of retaliation and vengeance. Brooding over their national wrongs leads them to dwell with complacency upon the punishments which God will inflict upon the enemies of His people. The happiness promised to the elect of the kingdom will consist, above all, in joy and untroubled delight. There will be no more war, hatred, or contention, but everywhere there will be peace and sincerity and love. The very beasts will be gentle and serve men. The earth will be blessed with great fruitfulness. Life will be prolonged to a thousand years, and yet old age will never come. Men will not become sated with life, but they will retain the enthusiasm and

<sup>1</sup> *Philo. de praem et poen*, § 16: *σεμνότης δεινότης, εὐεργεσία.*

vigour of childhood and youth. Women will bear their children without pain, and the harvester will not grow weary at his work. Such in a few words was the essential blessedness of the kingdom, the dream alike of the materialistic Israelite who read the Palestinian Apocalypses, and of the spiritual Jew of Alexandria. Philo himself, in spite of his desire to accentuate the moral aspect, could not wholly rid his mind of the popular conceptions. He expects, says Schürer, after the "ethical ideal" has been realised, a period of material happiness and well-being. Pious and upright men will rule the world; but this in no way precludes interior and spiritual virtues. Frankly material joys are the recompense of justice and sanctity, for all men shall be holy, says the Psalm of Solomon.<sup>1</sup> The Messiah will cleanse His people, and He will lead the flock of the Lord to pasture in faith and justice.<sup>2</sup> But this state of holiness is still according to the Mosaic ideal; the law and the temple continue in the new era to be the great organs of religious life.

A violent political upheaval which was to free the people of God from the Roman tyranny, the formation of the new kingdom of Israel in Palestine, the accession of all the nations which, recognising the moral superiority of the Jew, will become his vassals and minister to his wants, considering it a favour to send him rich tithes in order to ensure the blessings of Yahweh; such were the ideas which Jesus en-

<sup>1</sup> xvii. 36.

<sup>2</sup> xvii. 45.



countered at every step of His career as the Messiah and the Son of God.

These were not abstract lifeless ideas, only to be found in books and disseminated in the synagogues; as we have seen from the preaching of John, they had a wonderful vitality, they were alive to the fever pitch. Was Jesus the victim of these illusions? was He haunted by dreams such as these? Was He also stricken with this fever? We feel that the mere reading of the synoptic gospels must lead to the conclusion that Jesus had severed Himself entirely from such hopes. For a temporal and national kingdom He substituted the idea of a spiritual and universal kingdom. He Himself established it by His preaching, and He Himself throws open the doors of this kingdom to all nations.

## II

Jesus adopts the phrase which is in everyone's mouth. The subject of His preaching and that of His disciples is the same as John's: "Do penance, for the kingdom of God is at hand." The popular idea was, in a sense, the starting-point of His apostolate, nor did He wish to correct it at once. To Him it was a matter of less importance to make known the nature of the kingdom and explain its constitution and laws than to lead men to it, to prepare them by rousing their moral sense and changing their hearts, by preaching return to God

through penitence. His teaching was new, as we shall see. Had he made His revelation too suddenly it would have surprised and bewildered, for it had to encounter race prejudices and ardently cherished hopes. He had to transform the popular idea little by little and imperceptibly, after having secured His personal influence by miracles and by the authority of His preaching. Not only does our Saviour adopt the phrase of the universal aspiration, but to some extent He makes it His own. If He did not at once and abruptly check that strong tendency towards the kingdom to be established for the greater glory of the Jews, it was because He hoped to make Himself master of the movement by turning it towards Himself; for He was sure that, in order to modify and spiritualise the popular aspiration, He had but to substitute a higher aim.

The kingdom which He preached was in no way opposed to the powers of earth. His kingdom of heaven was not that of Daniel's vision as it was understood by His contemporaries. He fled and hid Himself from the crowd when they would have made Him king. He recognised the authority of the Emperor, and ordered tribute to be paid to him. In precise words He determined the difference between political and religious power, between the rights of Cæsar and the rights of God. The kingdom He would establish was no enemy to the Roman power; it could exist side by side with it; it was independent of it, for it was of another order. And

what was the other order? The synoptic gospels have preserved for us facts and sayings of Jesus which, though scattered without any apparent connection, form one organic whole; they are within the scope of one program; they were inspired by one persistent thought, a thought which underwent no process of evolution, for we find it alike at the beginning of our Lord's life, at the height of His apostolic labours, and again in the last days. Jesus Christ knew only one hostile power—evil and sin, which for Him, as for His contemporaries, was personified by Satan. Satan was His one foe, the one whom it was His mission to destroy. His kingdom, therefore, was of a religious and moral order.

The accounts of the temptation furnish the outline of the Messianic program such as Jesus conceived it in the days which immediately followed His baptism, and reveal to us the essential object of His work, His means of action, and the use He was to make of the divine power He wielded. The Saviour, after having been tempted, that is, after having been urged to use that power to satisfy His hunger and bodily needs, after being pressed to dazzle the Jewish people by prodigies and conjurer's tricks, had set before Him at length all the kingdoms of the world, which He was one day to conquer. He might become their master at once if He would but fall down and adore Satan. The foe, therefore, with whom He had to struggle was Satan, the unseen spiritual power which rules the world. To that universal empire of the devil

he opposed the universal empire of God. For that ancient sovereignty, spiritual by nature (though it is irreligious and immoral), he would substitute the sovereignty of God, spiritual also, but religious and moral. The kingdom of God which He was about to proclaim and establish was not therefore human and political; neither was it national and Jewish, since it embraced all the earth. His task was to fight against Satan, and His success in overcoming and routing His enemy would be the measure of His success in founding the kingdom of God.

A dialogue which took place between Jesus and the Pharisees throws a brilliant light on the fact that the kingdom of God was present, that the phase which we call *initial* and spiritual had been already realised. Jesus was defending Himself against the charge of expelling Satan by the power of Satan, and He forced His adversaries to conclude that it was in the name of God that His exorcisms were effectual. He continued His argument: "But if I by the power of God ['by the finger of God,' says St. Luke] cast out devils, then the kingdom of God is come upon you."<sup>1</sup> Here we have a decisive declaration. The Pharisees must have been aware that the first act of God's sovereignty would be to drive out the powers of evil, to deprive the devils of the authority they

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xii. 28; Luke xi. 20. "Ἀρα ἔφθασεν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ. Dalman is seemingly correct in referring the Greek word (ἐφθασεν ἐπὶ) to the Aramaic ܕܠ ܢܫܝܢ. God will save the world, since it is He who, by the instrumentality of Jesus, drives out the devils.

had obtained over men and the world. They must have concluded that God had already begun to reign and to manifest His sovereign power, since that power was actually exercised in Jesus and by Jesus. They had a sensible sign that the kingdom was established.

These words serve to explain a passage in the active life of our Lord which is otherwise somewhat obscure. His first miracle was an exorcism, for the performance of which a single word sufficed. The witnesses, who knew how slowly the Jews proceeded with their exorcisms, and were familiar with the magnetic passes and incantations they generally employed, did not conceal their surprise, nor fail to be struck with the difference between the procedure of the exorcists and that of the new wonder-worker. "Great fear came on all of them, so that they asked one of the other, What thing is this? what is the new doctrine? for with authority He commands the unseen spirits, and they obey Him."<sup>1</sup> Jesus then furnished indubitable proof that the sovereignty of God had begun to be exercised, and that the kingdom of God was advancing, by the relentless war which He waged against the devils and His repeated victories over them. We may accept the principle which Holtzmann styles a canon: the sovereignty of God progresses in proportion as Satan retires; for each backward step of the enemy there is a corresponding step forward of the kingdom of God.<sup>2</sup>

Must we not apply this principle in the interpreta-

<sup>1</sup> Mark i, 27.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, i. p. 218.

tion of the vision of the Saviour, when He had in mind the seventy-two sent against the wicked spirits?<sup>1</sup> They return with joy, saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject to us in Thy name." And He said to them, "I saw Satan like lightning fall from heaven." Through the sovereignty of God beginning to manifest itself, the sovereignty of evil is destroyed; and its fall is irreparable. God manifests His assumption of the government of the world by combating hostile powers and overcoming them. It is the first act of His sovereignty. Such is the principle which stands out clear and incontestable in the exorcisms of Jesus and His disciples.

Jesus divided the history of the Jewish people into two periods: the time of the prophets and the law until John appears; and, since John, the time of the kingdom of God. This view is derived from two parallel texts,<sup>2</sup> where it is clearly exemplified, though

<sup>1</sup> Luke x. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew xi. 12-15; Luke xvi. 16. The quotation of St. Luke seems to be severed from its context; the sense however is clear. The law and the prophets until John; since then the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone hastens, or is impelled violently, towards it. There is no question of a movement hostile to the kingdom of God, *βιάζetai eis* can only mean a tendency or inclination towards the kingdom. St. Matthew introduces verse 13 by γὰρ; according to him there is an essential relation between the two verses. The second then should explain the first: Why since the days of John does the kingdom suffer violence? Because the prophets and the law prophesied until John. The obvious sense is that the kingdom of God is founded since John. Cf. Renouvier, *Philosophie analytique de l'histoire*, ii. p. 411. *Ce qui est maintenant et ce qui était avant.*

Resch parallels St. Matthew's *βιάζetai* with St. Luke's *εὐαγγελίζetai*



there may be a difference of opinion as to the good order of the context in each case. For St. Matthew, as for St. Luke, John is a dividing line. He closed the era of the prophets and the law, and opens that of the kingdom of God. As to the manner in which the kingdom is received, whether the Jews be hostile or sympathetic, whether there be eagerness to seize it, or it be retarded by the political and religious authorities, are secondary questions, although we are inclined to think that according to both evangelists the kingdom required to be taken by force.

We come now to a classical text, which St. Luke alone has preserved.<sup>1</sup> Jesus having been asked by Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, answered: "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say: Behold here, or behold there; for lo, the kingdom of God is within you." When asked by the Pharisees to specify the time, Jesus answered that the kingdom was already come, and established in their midst. Foreseeing

and supposes a primitive Hebrew word, which would have been differently understood by the two evangelists. פָּרַע (Niphal = "to suffer violence," "to be broken," "to be opened," "to be made manifest") fulfils these conditions, but the parallel should be sought between Matthew xi. 13 and Luke xvi. 16, not elsewhere. Dalman (*op. cit.*, p. 140) suggests פָּקַח as the primitive word, which means in the Peal "to be strong," and in the Aphel "to hold fast"; but he would rather trace βιάζεσθαι to פָּקַח "to do violence or plunder"; the *logion* must, according to him, be referred to the imprisonment of John: the violent take the kingdom of Heaven by force, that is to say, the messengers of the kingdom, and so prevent its establishment.

<sup>1</sup> Luke xvii. 20, 21.

the natural objection on the part of men who expected it to appear suddenly with splendour, He warned them that the kingdom is invisible.<sup>1</sup> We will not insist on the many passages in which Jesus spoke of the kingdom of God as actually existing and accessible, a blessing at once procurable: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice"; "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, because you shut the kingdom of Heaven against men; for you go not in yourselves: and those that are going in you suffer not to enter." The subject is clearly the longing after justice with which the Saviour inspires those who adhere to Him, through which they become members of the kingdom; and, consequently, the actual entry into the possession of the kingdom.

The declaration of Jesus Christ concerning John the Baptist is meaningless unless it refers to a kingdom of God already founded. "The least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." That is to say, the least of those who are citizens of the kingdom, because they are my disciples, are greater than the herald of the kingdom. John is not to be excluded from the kingdom of God in its final phase; there-

<sup>1</sup> Whether we translate *ἐν τοῖς ὑμῶν* among you, in your midst, or inside you, the former laying stress on the present reality of the kingdom, the latter on its spiritual and interior nature, the final sense is that the kingdom is already realised, and that being come it is invisible. Dalman (p. 147) translates *ἐν τοῖς* inside, and concludes with an ingenious observation: Just as the power of Jesus over the devils reveals the theocracy, even to outward vision, so the power of His word is a similar revelation, which, though invisible, is not on that account of less demonstrative value.

fore these words cannot but refer to the initial phase of that kingdom established by Jesus Christ Himself.

That the sovereignty of God is spiritual, and that it was already in existence, are two conclusions which are forced upon us by the consideration of the exorcisms of Jesus and His disciples, by His view of the world as disclosed to us in the accounts of the temptation, and by the series of *logia* pronounced at different periods of His apostolate.

These same conclusions are rendered even more necessary when we examine the parables delivered by the Saviour on the subject of the kingdom of Heaven. It is no exaggeration, we think, to compare the picturesque incident at the Lake of Tiberias, when Jesus went into the boat and spoke those parables, with the Sermon on the Mount and Peter's confession on the road to Cesarea. These constitute the three great episodes of the Galilean period. Not long afterwards the apostles, being at length sufficiently instructed, were despatched upon their mission. Already we foresee the falling away of the crowd, their surprise and mortification when they learned that the new revelation was not to realise the Messianic dreams so long cherished. The preaching from the boat by the Capharnaum shore was therefore a central, and all but decisive, event in the apostolate of the Saviour. Upon the Mount he proclaimed the beatitudes, His law and His moral code, which set the disciple on the road to the kingdom; but He kept back a secret, which then it seemed

inopportune to disclose: the mystery or the mysteries of the kingdom of God. The doctrine of the parables was the complement of the beatitudes; the latter had to be mastered and put in practice before the former could be heard and understood.<sup>1</sup>

And here we may inquire what was the object of the parables. Does the truth they contain refer to the kingdom of God? In their present form they certainly relate to the kingdom of God; they make known the character of that kingdom, the conditions of its growth, and the stages of its development. But was it thus in the primitive source? Might not the words which introduce them be merely loose inexact formulæ, added by an unskilful evangelist, who was mistaken as to the true significance and application of the parables?<sup>2</sup> Without doubt some of

<sup>1</sup> We absolutely reject the common opinion that Jesus could have spoken in parables in order not to be understood. Such an intention is at open variance with the choice of subjects, the simple form, the familiar mode of the parables. He wished above all to put His doctrine within reach of His hearers, who, materialistic though they were, were eager to understand Him. The allusion to the mission of Isaias (Isaias vi.) to harden the hearts and blind the eyes of the people, far from contradicting this interpretation, seems rather to confirm it. Yahweh orders His prophet to make one last effort to bring back His wandering people. If this supreme attempt, accompanied by severe threats, be unsuccessful, then blindness will follow of itself. So it is in our case. If the crowd does not understand the mystery of Jesus offered under the clear form of the parable, nothing can be hoped of it; then it is hardened, blinded, reprobate. *According to the intention of Jesus*, the parabolical instruction was therefore an act of love and divine condescension, and not an act of reprobation.

<sup>2</sup> Such is the opinion of J. Weiss: *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes*, 1892.

these introductory formulæ seem to have been modified by the redactor of the first gospel, and not to be attributable in their actual form to Jesus Christ Himself. According to St. Matthew, for example, the kingdom of Heaven<sup>1</sup> is likened to a man who sows his seed, while the Saviour compared it to the seed itself. On the other hand, the parallel passages in St. Mark and St. Luke seem to be primitive. They appear to be conventional settings adapted to the sense of each parable; better perhaps, preludes necessary to introduce to the hearer the teaching which ensues. We consider them to be authentic, that is to say, as the Saviour Himself pronounced them. The repeated interrogations:<sup>2</sup> To what shall we compare the kingdom of God? To what is it likened? To what shall I compare it? have all the appearance of deliberate hesitation, the halting of a lofty intelligence looking for the simple comparisons which would be within the reach of the disciples and of the multitude who are listening to Him.

What, then, is the mystery which it is so important to know, since those who fail to penetrate it<sup>3</sup> "seeing shall not perceive, and hearing shall not hear, and not understand, and shall not be converted nor have their sins forgiven them"?<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> xiii. 24.: ὡμοι ὥθη ἡ βασιλεῖα τῶν οὐρανῶν ἀνθρώπῳ σπείραντι καλὸν σπέρμα. The formula is evidently narrative, and therefore St. Matthew's.

<sup>2</sup> Mark iv. 30; Luke xiii. 18, 20.

<sup>3</sup> Mark iv. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Might one say that the parables relate not to the kingdom of God, but to *the word* of Jesus, to *the gospel itself*; that the Saviour wished

The parables, differentiated by the greater or less importance given to secondary characters and the new points of view they suggest, were told by Jesus in order to reveal the mysterious nature of the sovereignty of God. Their general sense is that the kingdom is not founded by a sudden act of God's omnipotence. It is established in men's hearts; it is sown there like seed; it grows there silently, softly, of itself; then it opens out, and the stalk at length stands visible, full in the ear, ripe for harvest. "So is the kingdom of God as if a man should cast seed into the earth, and should sleep and rise, night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow whilst he knoweth not. For the earth of itself (*αὐτομάτη*) bringeth forth fruit, first the blade, then the ear, afterwards the full corn in the ear. And when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle because the harvest is come." By the reality and depth of its observation, by the beauty of the symbol, by the peace and harmony of its rhythm, this delightful parable, spoken from the boat, some-

to make known that His preaching, His gospel, had to be unfolded slowly, and that as long as this unfolding was delayed the kingdom of God would not come? If so, the subject of the parables might be formulated thus: laws according to which the gospel is unfolded, and not laws according to which the kingdom of Heaven is established and grows. This substitution is only permissible in so far as the kingdom of God is purely eschatological. But evidently Jesus is here speaking of a theocracy which is invisible, spiritual, already existent and active. It has also been justly remarked that, in our Lord's mind, the unfolding of the gospel is like the unfolding of the kingdom of God, to which it is constantly proportionate.



thing of the movement of which it seems to have retained, may be compared, and not to its disadvantage, with the best fragments of the gnostic poetry. It is also specially interesting to us as the best possible witness to the Saviour's state of soul. The critics delight to depict Him as overweighted with His work, harassed by the surprises of His apostolate, with His mental balance all but threatened, impatient, like the crowd jostling around Him, to see the day of judgment appear with its great eschatological manifestation. He who spoke this parable was no fanatic.<sup>1</sup> Impatience is not His characteristic, for He orders His disciples to let the germ of divine life, which He has planted in them by His word, grow and ripen slowly, silently. The Jews expected the revelation of God to be brilliant and blinding—like a meteor. The kingdom is founded in a hidden and invisible manner, says Jesus. According to them, it will be established in an instant by the all-powerful, irresistible intervention of God. No, says the Saviour; it requires slow germination, and only the dispositions of the heart can further it. Should we hasten its coming, and separate the bad from the good forthwith? "Wilt thou," the servant asks the

<sup>1</sup> It would be to miss the sense of this parable completely to deduce from it as fundamental the predominant part of God in the formation of the kingdom, and to insist before all upon His initiation and final intervention. Absolutely, on the contrary, the rôle of the sower is reduced to a minimum: he sows and he reaps. The *spontaneity*, the slowness and silence of growth, quite apart from the action of the sower, is the incontestable teaching of Jesus.

Master, "that we go and gather up the cockle?" "No," He replies, "lest perhaps gathering up the cockle you root up the wheat also together with it. Suffer both to grow until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers: Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn, but the wheat gather ye into my barn." For effulgent suddenness, the Saviour substitutes invisible, slow elaboration; instead of an infallible act of God's omnipotence, he requires the collaboration of hearts and wills; to imminence he opposes the indefinite future.

This was the revelation of Jesus Christ, the new doctrine; such were the mysteries of the kingdom made manifest. By this spiritual conception of the sovereignty of God He severed Himself from the eschatology of the Jewish imagination; He was in conflict with the genius of His race; He cut the ties which bound Him to His people, whose very impulses towards God, and passionate appeals to His justice and mercy, were haunted by material preoccupations, and sank back speedily into egoism. And if He is at one with the moralists of all schools and every time, He went beyond them immeasurably by His doctrine, which reaches to the depths of the conscience, by the gift of His grace, which forms hearts anew; while the sages of Greece and Rome were often no more than *virtuosi* of morality, while the sincerest of them admitted his helplessness in the almost despairing words, "How can the interior

dispositions of man be changed?" And He outstripped them yet further when He proposed to His disciples as the model of justice and sanctity the justice of the Father who is in heaven; when for the ancient maxims, "Know thyself," "Be a man," "The measure of goodness is the good man," He substituted the new maxims: "Know God and be like God," "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect."

## III

We have shown that it is necessary to distinguish the initial phase of the kingdom of God from the final or eschatological phase. In the first phase, we have said, the sovereignty of God, invisible and spiritual, was exercised over souls, renewing and transforming them, giving them a new impulse towards God. The Saviour was not only, like John the Baptist, a messenger and a prophet of the kingdom; He was its founder. Was His vision of the future more distinct than that of the Precursor? Did He unravel and enlighten it? Did it stand out the clearer for what He said? Did He think He was about to inaugurate, and at once, the final phase? We consider that, if Jesus Christ wished the kingdom to be universal, if He Himself ordered His apostles to preach it throughout the world, by that

very circumstance He postponed the moment of the parousia to an indefinite future.<sup>1</sup>

All the critics agree that the authors of the three synoptic gospels were universalists. "And the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony to all nations ; and then the consummation shall come."<sup>2</sup> The good news, therefore, had first to be preached to all nations.<sup>3</sup> St. Luke has preserved two texts<sup>4</sup> which present the complete program of the apostles' labours. "You shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth." It is true that many exegetists have doubted the authenticity of these texts, and do not regard them as words of Jesus. According to them, it was the evangelists and the disciples of the apostles who introduced them among the sayings of Jesus, in order to justify their mission to the Gentiles, as well as to explain the delay of the second coming. Their theory is that these *logia* contradict others which are certainly genuine utterances of Jesus, who came "to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel," who chose twelve apostles according to the number of the tribes, who, when He sent them to carry the

<sup>1</sup> We have no intention of treating exhaustively the exegetical and theological difficulties which this question involves. We merely wish to collect certain data which by their accumulated force and tendency put the problem we are discussing in a clear light, and prepare for its definite solution.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew xxiv. 14 ; cf. xxviii. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Mark xiii. 10 ; cf. xvi. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Luke xxiv. 47 ; Acts i. 8.

good news of the kingdom, forbade them to preach to the pagans and the Samaritans. Jesus, according to some of the critics, was not a universalist; the field of His apostolate was Palestine alone, and to the Jews alone, they say, he opened the kingdom. Others think that His ideas underwent development, and that He gradually enlarged the Messianic scheme; that at the beginning of His preaching He had only His fellow-citizens in view, but that, meeting with no success among them, and also taking into account the faith and goodwill He discovered among the Gentiles, He afterwards extended His limits, so as to admit all men to the benefits of salvation.

These two hypotheses seem to us to misunderstand very distinct and essential features which the evangelists have preserved. Jesus, when He appeared, had been preceded by a cycle of prophecies foretelling the coming of all nations to Jerusalem, their annual pilgrimage to celebrate the feast of tabernacles, their recognition of the God of the Jews as the true God. These predictions flash like lightning upon his Messianic horizon; they alone would have sufficed to constrain Jesus to carry beyond the limits of His little nation the salvation which He brought to the world. Jesus knew the prophets; His first teachings in the synagogue of Nazareth bear witness to a profound knowledge of Isaiah. Could He, with this knowledge, of His own accord draw back and shirk the task? If the God of Jonas<sup>1</sup> could

<sup>1</sup> iv. 10, 11.

chide His prophet because he wondered at His mercy, and could say to him: "Thou art grieved for the ivy for which thou hast not laboured nor made it to grow, which in one night came up and in one night perished. And shall I not spare Ninive, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons? . . ." would not the God of Jesus have pity on mankind, whose Father He is? But the prophecies, they say, only occurred to His mind after He had suffered repeated checks, both in Galilee and Judæa; after He had by happy chance come in contact with pagans like the centurion and the Syrian woman. These experiences, ripening His thoughts, would have enlarged them, and been true turning-points in His apostolate. It is merely conjectural, if not rash, to search the gospels in order to discover the variations of an intellect which from the first owed its influence to its unswerving point of view, to the distinctness of an integral plan. We hold, on the contrary, that the thought of the last days is one with that of the first, for the following reasons:—

In the temptation, as we have already pointed out, we find the whole Messianic plan of the Saviour. The area to be conquered embraced all the empires of the world, and the temptation had to do neither with the fact nor the extent of the conquest, but with the mode. The Sermon on the Mount, which is, as it were, a *résumé* of the thought of the early days, which gives the essential elements of the



Galilean preaching, is universalist in its teaching. Among the audience were not only Jews of Judæa, Galilee, and Jerusalem, but inhabitants of Tyre, Sidon, and Decapolis; and though Jesus ostensibly addressed only the handful of His disciples, who were in the front rank of the crowd, His words were heard also by those who had come to hear Him and to be cured of their diseases. He tells His disciples that they are the salt of the earth.<sup>1</sup> There is neither geographical nor ethnographical restriction, and this salt is destined to give its savour to the earth.<sup>2</sup> The entire world, again without restriction, is placed in the field of illumination of that Light which shines in order that men may see it and come to God: "A city seated on a mountain cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but upon a candlestick, that it may shine to all that are in the house. So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." The appeal to the world to behold this light and glorify the God of Israel was the prospect opened by Jesus from the very outset of the gospel.

St. Mark and St. Luke record the exhortation<sup>3</sup> made by Jesus to the demoniac whom He cured on the eastern shore, in the country of the Gerasens.

<sup>1</sup> Matthew v. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew v. 14 *et seq.* In the parable of the cockle (tares) the field to be sown is the world: ὁ δὲ ἀργὸς ἐστὶν ὁ κόσμος.

<sup>3</sup> Mark v. 19, 20; Luke viii. 38, 39.

The demoniac asked permission to remain with Him. The Saviour refused it, saying: "Go into thy house, to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had mercy on thee. And he went his way, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him, and all men wondered." The sick man to whom Jesus revealed Himself received the order to make known to the pagan towns devoted to the great divinities of Rome and Greece and Syria what had been done for him by the Lord, the God adored by the hated and despised people on the other side of the river.

It was not alone at the end of His life that He called to mind the universalist prophecies, for according to the famous passage which St. Matthew<sup>1</sup> introduces into the account of an early miracle, He Himself foretold the entry of the Gentiles into the kingdom. Touched by the humility and faith of the centurion, the declaration escaped Him, the accent of which is unmistakable, not as a new idea, but as a thought shaped long ago. "And I say to you that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of Heaven." The faith which He found among the pagans was not a surprise to Him, still less was it that which suggested to Him the extension of His apostolate; it was only the occasion which called forth the avowal. Jesus, in short, knew the

<sup>1</sup> viii. ii. St. Luke introduces it in another connection (xiii. 29.)

history of His people; He had seen in it many examples of faith recompensed; He had noted the special privileges accorded to the pagans to whom prophets were sent. The declarations He made to His fellow-citizens of Nazareth are characteristic:<sup>1</sup> "Amen, I say to you, that no prophet is accepted in his own country. In truth I say to you, there were many widows in the days of Elias in Israel, when heaven was shut up for three years and six months, when there was a great famine throughout all the earth; and to none of them was Elias sent but to Sarepta, of Sidon, to a widow woman; and there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet, but none of them was cleansed but Naman the Syrian." Was not that a solemn warning that such examples might yet be followed by others? Later<sup>2</sup> He again reminded the Jews that the Queen of the South and the men of Nineveh shall rise up to accuse them in the day of judgment.

We were then sufficiently justified in saying that the thought of the last days goes back across a long apostolate to that of the early days, that Jesus *Himself* opened the doors of the kingdom to all men. To question the authenticity of the words we have reproduced, to regard them as the work of the disciples, is to destroy all historical study of the gospels, not to mention the discredit necessarily cast upon the veracity of the evangelists.

Israel is the chosen field of the Saviour: it is the

<sup>1</sup> Luke iv. 24 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> Luke xi. 31, 32.

first to be called, it is the heir to the chief legacy. "Suffer *first* the children to be filled," Jesus says to the woman of Syria.<sup>1</sup> He loved His people so much that He gave them the whole of His apostolic labour, all His power as a wonder-worker ; to such a degree that He considered the entreaty for a miracle on the part of the pagan woman as prejudicial to the rights of Israel : "for it is not good to take the bread of the children and cast it to the dogs." But the fact no less remains that, from the outset of the Messianic manifestation, the whole world comes into the plane of spiritual conquest ; and if He kept Israel for Himself, He gave to His disciples the universe for the field of their apostolate. There is, therefore, no contradiction between the words "I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel" and the command of the Saviour at the moment of His ascension into heaven : "You shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth."

The doctrine of Jesus Christ upon the spiritual nature of the kingdom of God and on the universal expansion of its sovereignty stands out concisely. It appeared in the luminous simplicity of its grand lines to an early disciple, to the first Christian conscience to which we are able to make appeal, to St. Paul. And Paul nevertheless was a Pharisee, a pupil of the great masters, a Hebrew and the son of a Hebrew ; as such strongly permeated with the

<sup>1</sup> Mark vii. 27.

great national aspiration. From the moment of his conversion he applied all his scriptural learning to comprehend, explain, and develop this spiritual notion of the sovereignty of God, which he calls renovation through the Holy Spirit: he devoted all his apostolic fervour to carrying the gospel of the kingdom into the Roman Empire, thus fulfilling to the letter the Saviour's command: "You shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth."

We do not pretend, however, that the crowd completely understood the preaching of Jesus, or laid its prejudices aside. The modest triumph<sup>1</sup> which the Galileans prepared for Him bears evident witness to the survival of political dreams: "Hosanna! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord! Blessed be the kingdom of our father David that cometh! Hosanna in the highest." Among the disciples themselves the national hopes persist along with the religious hopes; they were not yet quite disentangled when the Saviour left them at the mount of the ascension.<sup>2</sup> "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?" But the revelation had been made to them, and by the grace of the Holy Spirit which purified their hearts and rectified their judgment, in the course of time and events<sup>3</sup> the teaching of Jesus came back into their memory with all its distinctness and high spirituality.

<sup>1</sup> Mark xi. 9, 10.

<sup>2</sup> Acts i. 6.

<sup>3</sup> John ii. 22.

Did the teaching of Jesus Christ go beyond that of John the Baptist? Was He, like him, only a herald, another preacher of the kingdom? Is the kingdom only the restoration of Israel? Did Jesus expect it as near at hand? These are the questions with which we began our study. We think that we have established that the Saviour's life was one continual protest against the popular idea, and that if Jesus at the outset avoided a violent shock to that idea, it was only from motives of pity, lest He should drive the crowds to despair and provoke a dangerous rupture. What a gap there is between the historical Jesus, as the gospels reveal Him to us, as He appeared to Christian minds in the early days, and the Jesus whom critics of the liberal schools have not feared to represent as "a narrow-minded Jew," wrapt up in apocalyptic dreams, the insignificant agitator of the northern tribes, who dreamed among the hills of Nazareth, whose thought did not extend beyond the narrow horizon of His village.



## IV

### THE HEAVENLY FATHER

**I**N the preceding chapter we distinguished an initial and an eschatological phase of the kingdom of God. The initial phase is essentially spiritual, for its essential characteristics are: the struggle which Jesus undertakes against evil; a new and extraordinarily exacting moral law; the promise of admission to the kingdom, not at birth, but at the time of repentance; not to those who observe rites, but to those who listen to the commands of the Saviour and fulfil them.

This will be surprising, and should be suggestive, to the historian who would regard every man of genius as the product of his time, who would look invariably to his antecedents to explain his thoughts, even though they be most original and profound. We do not see which among the prophets and emissaries of God could have transmitted to Jesus Christ the conception of the kingdom of God with which He astounded His hearers. In the collection of texts, so carefully selected and arranged, we look in vain for those which could have inspired His morality, supernatural in its essence, and yet so

broadly human that it harmonises with the fundamental postulates of the conscience. To say that it welled forth from His beautiful nature, that it is the fruit of His great genius, is to state the problem, not to explain it. Would it not be more logical to explain it as the outcome of divine intuition and inspiration?

Having studied the nature of the sovereignty of God, we proceed to examine the revelation which Jesus made concerning God Himself. What name did He give to Him who rules the world? Confused by the inconsistency of events, and the inflexible determinism of the laws of nature, discouraged by the frequent disappointment of his dearest hopes and his most laudable predilections, the victim of material forces, before which he feels himself to be helpless, how many times has man not dared believe in the intelligence and goodness of the purpose which governs the world. How many times has he not murmured, adopting the words of the impious: There is no God; refusing at the same time to take refuge in the dry stoicism which some deduce from the sentence of Pascal: "If the universe should crush him, man would still be nobler than that which kills him, because he knows that he dies."

No man has seen God, says St. John at the end of the prologue to his gospel. "The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." What is the value of this assertion, which sums up the faith of the apostle and that of the century which saw the only-begotten of the Father?

How did Jesus pray to God and love Him? How did He view Him in relation to the world, and especially to man? This is the problem of problems. There is no one who does not perceive the impression of certitude produced by the teaching of Jesus, and still more by His life and personality. Even those who have impoverished His history by excluding from it the accounts of the miraculous birth and the resurrection, who by so doing have reduced His life to the proportions of a purely human episode, nevertheless declare that, by His life and death, humanity acquired the certainty of an everlasting life, of a divine love. "Eighteen centuries separate us from that story," says Harnack; "and when we ask ourselves seriously what it is which enables us to believe that God intervenes in human affairs, not only by doctrine and revelation, but by presence in the midst of them; which enables us to believe in everlasting life, we reply: We dare to hold this belief through Jesus Christ."

So even for those who have reduced faith in Jesus Christ to a minimum, and who have deprived it of its chief value, the personality of the Saviour remains the best guarantee of His doctrine, and forbids the critic to regard the Christian revelation as a normal development in the history of religions. It is therefore of interest to interrogate Jesus Christ, since human reason admits itself powerless to enlighten the mystery with which we are confronted; since the ancient religions, notwithstanding the beauty of their

legends, in spite of the passionate efforts made to extricate their symbolical meaning, remain outside the actual requirements of the conscience. The prophet Zacharias spoke of a time when men of every tongue should seize an Israelite by the border of his robe and say to him: We will go with thee, for we learn that God is with thee. Has not a son of Israel, the only-begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, fulfilled the prophecy?

One day, the evangelist St. Luke<sup>1</sup> narrates, Jesus was praying, apparently upon one of the slopes of the Mount of Olives. When He had ceased, one of His apostles, who had been looking at Him as He prayed, said to Him: Teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. Jesus answered: When you pray, say:

Father,  
Hallowed be Thy name.  
Thy kingdom come.  
Give us each day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive every one  
that is indebted to us.  
And lead us not into temptation.

Father, heavenly Father! That is the new cry, the solitary invocation and chief note of the prayer improvised by Jesus, which He places upon the lips of His disciples. This prayer, which is to distinguish His disciples from the disciples of John and from the Jewish sects, boldly and without hesitation takes

<sup>1</sup> xi. 1 *et seq.*

its flight to God. All the other attributes of God stand aside, as it were, in order to give place to the attribute of Father; all the sentiments of fear and distance which the divinity once inspired are trodden under foot by the strongest and most intimate love. The petitions which follow, introduced by that all-powerful invocation, are vivified through the intuition of supreme tenderness, and carry with them the guarantee that they are heard by Him who calls Himself Father, who recognises all the disciples of Jesus as His sons.

Another declaration of the Saviour, as grave in its terms and even more solemn in tone, forces us to believe that Jesus is the revealer of God as the Father:<sup>1</sup> "No one knoweth . . . the Father but the Son, and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal Him." The knowledge of the paternity of God is the new thing of which Christianity now appears to be the depositary. But the whole of the history of Israel seems to attest that God had already made Himself known to His people as Father, that He had suggested to the Israelite heart the sentiments of a son, that the Israelite called himself the son of God. Then the invocation was not new; the power to become sons of God was not an emolument of the Messianic period; the prayer of Jesus, with its intuition of paternal love, its confidence, did not go beyond the formulary of the Pharisees and the Scribes. The subject of the

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xi. 27.

paternity of God as revealed by Jesus Christ begins with this difficulty, which we must endeavour to solve. For this purpose we turn to certain Old Testament texts to find out how the prophets and sacred writers conceived God.

These texts occur in writings of different epochs, and with variations of sense which it is interesting to note, although it may not be possible to trace an evolution of concept properly so called. Side by side with the attributes ascribed to the Deity in the patriarchal and Mosaic age, attributes which dwelt upon the inapproachable transcendency of Yahweh, which emphasised the fear He inspires, His omnipotent dominion over His creatures, His implacable will determined by inscrutable motives, an attribute of kindness and love is little by little perceived. We mention only the assurance given by God to Moses when He sends him to Pharaoh, "Israel is My son, My firstborn."<sup>1</sup> The text is unique; one might almost suppose that it is separated from its proper setting. The Israelite, indeed, seems not to remember that other peoples are also sons of God, and consequently his brothers, entitled, like himself, to the blessings of Yahweh. The paternity of God, according to the texts as a whole, is reserved for Israel to the exclusion of other nations. God and the people He has chosen from among the rest constitute a true family. Israel His son may invoke Him as Father, in the confidence that a loving Providence watches

<sup>1</sup> Exodus iv, 22.



over him, that Yahweh the Father will reward him so long as he remains faithful to the covenant of Sinai, practising the law, and the cult as regulated by the liturgy. The correlative terms of father and son indicate the special relationship of intimacy and tenderness which God had established between Himself and His people.

Later a new and broader interpretation appears. God is implored by the prophets<sup>1</sup> to have pity on Israel, whose Father He is as first cause, by the act of creation :—

“And now, O Lord, Thou art our Father,  
And we are clay, and Thou art our Maker,  
And we are all the works of Thy hands.”

The prayer of the Israelite to Yahweh the Creator has a philosophical note; it is inspired from the same source as the Greek or Roman prayer to the *deus deorum hominumque pater*; it has affinity to the prayer of Cleanthus, and might have been incorporated in his hymn: “Zeus, author of every good, God whom dark clouds hide, Lord of the thunder, draw out men from the gloom of their ignorance, scatter the darkness of their souls, O Father.” It is the only paternity which Philo seems to have known and invoked; it is as universal, as vast as the Providence of which it is the exact synonym, and it extends to all men, who enjoy equal rights before the Father, the Creator.

<sup>1</sup> Isaias lxiv. 8.

We set aside this last notion of the paternity of God as common to all philosophies and to every positive religion : as such it is in no way peculiar to Israel, and does not concern our thesis ; we retain only the first notion, which denotes predilection, and special blessings to which other nations have no claim. We must be on our guard here against a conclusion which certain theologians, moved by apologetic interests, hasten to draw. According to these, the Old Testament knew nothing of the paternity of God as applied to individuals ; the providence of God the Father extended directly to the people. Israel collectively was the son of God ; the individual could not arrive at a personal sense of divine sonship. Jesus, they say, abandoned this conception of collective sonship. He first made known to the world that it extends to all and each ; and He it was who gave to each the power to become a son of God. We refuse to accept this facile solution, for the reason that individual prayers, vivified by a sense of confidence and love, are not wanting in the psalms and in the prophets, although the specific titles of father and son are not found ; and also because it is impossible to conceive God as Father to a people, unless the paternity resolves itself into benefits to individuals. This conclusion is further supported by positive, formal testimony of high value, though of a late period.

The writer of the Ecclesiasticus, a Palestinian as we know, in whom it is difficult to admit Alexandrian

influence, invokes Yahweh as the father and sovereign ruler of *his* life.<sup>1</sup> Later on<sup>2</sup> also he calls Yahweh *his* Father, *his* Lord. The author of the Book of Wisdom, while reserving to Israel the title of Son of God, according to the traditional usage, recognises a sonship proper to the pious and just man; the just man is the son, the true son of Yahweh.<sup>3</sup> It appears from these texts that each Jew was conscious of being a son of God, and that in this relationship of father and son undoubtedly he understood the existence of a bond of affection exceeding Providence, and in a measure going beyond the compact of Sinai.

Confronted with this testimony, certain critics have tried to make the revelation of Jesus consist in the substitution of the name of Father for those of Yahweh and Adonai. According to them He showed that the paternity of God is the first of all His attributes, that He is essentially love, and that the aim of His intelligence and His omnipotence is a work of love. We cannot accept this solution, presented thus broadly without restriction or distinction, for the following reasons.

After the destruction of Jerusalem and the national disaster, the Jews who had escaped massacre and exile succeeded in grouping themselves in the plain of Sharon and especially about Tiberias and in the highlands of Galilee. They rebuilt their synagogues, and on the very mountains where Jesus had prayed and taught others to pray, where

<sup>1</sup> xxiii. 1 and 4.

<sup>2</sup> li. 14.

<sup>3</sup> ii. 13 and 18.

He had revealed to His disciples the heavenly Father, by the lake where He had unfolded the mystery of the kingdom of Heaven, these Israelites continued to invoke God as their fathers before them had done, and they called Him heavenly Father. They opposed the Father in heaven to the father on earth.<sup>1</sup> Love of His children is the essential attribute of the Father. "The Israelites are loved (by God) because they call themselves the sons of God; this special love which makes them sons of God was announced to them when it was said: 'You are sons of Yahweh, your God.'" The rabbis themselves substituted the name heavenly Father for the other divine names. "Since the beloved sons angered their heavenly Father, he placed them under the yoke of an impious king." The whole of bygone history is commentated and reviewed in the light of this idea; it is the love of the heavenly Father which guided and made that history, which now transfigures it. "It was not the hands of Moses raised to heaven which procured the victory over Amalek; it was not the serpent lifted up which obtained the cessation of the plague; but the fact that the Israelites looked to the heavenly Father and turned their hearts towards Him." When every other hope fails, one refuge remains for the Jew. "In whom shall we trust? In our heavenly Father." The relation of father and son is not confined to Israel as a nation. Every Israelite is the son of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Dalman, *The Words of Jesus*, 184 ss.

God, and God is the Father of each. Eleazer ben Azarya speaks of things which *his* heavenly Father has forbidden. Yehuda ben Tema gives this exhortation : " Be bold as a leopard, watchful as an eagle, swift as a gazelle, strong as a lion, to do the will of *thy* heavenly Father."

It is true that these testimonies are posterior to the time of Jesus ; but the sentiments they express had no other source than the prophets and the psalms ; it is the aspiration of the fathers which survives in them. That confidence in God, that assurance of the love of God must have been great ; for after the destruction of Jerusalem, the revolution of 130, and the ruin of the nation, the rabbis of Tiberias and Jabneh might well have asked themselves how far Yahweh had really been a Father to His people. It is evident that Jesus was not the first to teach men to invoke God as Father, that He did not invent the name heavenly Father, but found it already in common use among the Israelites, His contemporaries ; since later, in the synagogues, the Jews appealed to the paternity of God and to their title of sons of the heavenly Father. In the next place, although the paternal providence of God was in the first instance addressed to the Jewish nation, and the nation as such regarded itself as the son of God, the sense of sonship is frequent among individuals.

In what sense, then, is Jesus the revealer of the paternity of God ? To reveal God is not necessarily

to give Him a new name, nor even to make known an attribute hitherto unknown ; it is sufficient to find an attribute more or less hidden in obscurity and bring it within the scope of the religious and moral and intellectual life to quicken and illuminate them. The words "father" and "son" designate and restrict a relationship of affection between God and man ; our object is to discover the sense concealed under this metaphor. In itself it is capable of significations as numerous as are the degrees and possible shades of love. We believe and assert that Jesus has given us the assurance that God is truly Father to men, that men may really become His sons ; that if the words "father" and "son" indicate, in the order of nature, the strongest and most intimate love, with reciprocal duties and obligations, the same was true of the relationships about to be established between God and humanity. But such new relationships of full and perfect love are precisely the revelation of Jesus. They are the outcome of a new intervention of God in the government of the world ; the consequence of the fact that the sovereignty of God has begun. And, just as Jesus is not only the preacher of the kingdom, but also the founder, so He is not only the prophet sent to reveal the paternity of God, but also, and specially, the authorised intermediary who establishes the paternity by giving to all men the power to become sons of God. This is how we understand the revelation of Jesus, less as a new doctrine than as a new thing.



We do not deny that the explanations given by other critics have value: the Jews did not know the plenitude of the love of God; they did not suspect that they could become really the sons of God. The tone which pervades their prayers, the inspirations which produced them, their literary context, and still more their historical context, do not warrant the belief that in them the sentiment of love was ever substituted for other sentiments. But the truth of those different explanations is only partial; they are valueless unless they are limited in the sense we have indicated, being viewed in the light of the Messianic times and the public life of Jesus. We place ourselves at this point of view in order to understand the two terms of the new relationship which is established at the beginning of a new age between God, the Father of men, and men, the sons of God.

## II

Jesus, going again over the furrow opened by John the Baptist, to deepen and sow it anew, preaches the imminence, then the presence, of the kingdom of God. According to the formula of St. Mark,<sup>1</sup> to all appearance the more ancient, he says, "The time is accomplished, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent, and believe the gospel." What is this kingdom to be? What King is it? How will God make Himself manifest to the world? The formula of the

<sup>1</sup> i. 15.

message as reproduced by the evangelists, short and crisp as it is, needs to be encased in speech and parables, to be interpreted in the light of action, in order to appear in its breadth, intensity, and import. God appears to have in the gospel only one name: He is the Father, the heavenly Father. It is not a King who is about to reign; it is a Father, and His reign is a reign of love.

A really new sentiment seems to burst from all hearts in consequence of this revelation, which is recognised as a theophany, described by Zachary as being radiant with the splendours of the day-spring. In the imaginations of the Palestinian communities, of which his canticle has preserved the reflection, the manifestation of God is likened to the rising sun, giving light and guidance to all men;<sup>1</sup> and the triumphant joy of the old Hebrew poet,<sup>2</sup> singing the exodus of Yahweh out of Sinai and Seir, from the mountains of Pharan, and His entry into the land of Canaan with His people, is not to be compared with the spontaneous enthusiasm of the Galileans acclaiming what was in a way the aurora of a new God revealing Himself in love and mercy. The invocation of God the Father is continually falling from the lips of Jesus. It reappears unceasingly; to mark the periods in the sermon on the mount, to give authority to new precepts, to enhance them as moral guides, to widen infinitely their obligatory

<sup>1</sup> Luke i. 78, 79.

<sup>2</sup> The blessing of Moses, Deuteronomy xxxiii.

value and their scope, to show that they are requisite through the relations between God, Father of men, and men, the sons of God. The paternity is, if one may so express it, the horizon of the divine world which Jesus opens to His disciples. "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you . . . that you may be children of your Father who is in heaven." "Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect."<sup>1</sup> "Pray to thy Father in secret; and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee."<sup>2</sup> "And call none your father upon earth: for One is your Father, who is in heaven."<sup>3</sup>

The kingdom of God is near; it has already begun; God is resolved to reign as a Father, to undertake the government of the world in a special manner, and humanity will witness the unfolding of a scheme of love, and see a new era in the history of the divine favour. We will endeavour to define this new intervention of the heavenly Father, and determine the order in which it is manifested and the end to which it is directed.

The love which Jesus reveals to the world does not suspend nor modify the laws of nature. Nothing in the course of divine Providence is changed; the distribution of goods and ills remains as it was. It is not, then, in this order that we should look for the

<sup>1</sup> Matthew v. 16, 44, 45, 48.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew vi. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew xxiii. 9.

operation of the new principle. Jesus does not promise His disciples any special happiness, nor any ampler participation in the good things of this world. There is divine Providence, the intelligent, free Will, which presides over the successive actions of the forces of nature, forces which that will created and set in order, to act and react according to their potentiality. And if on this subject the Saviour continued the teaching of the fathers, He has enriched the ancient faith with new formulæ, with a deeper significance, and a notation which men have since either adopted or at least respected. This Providence is universal; it is watchful; nothing escapes it; the sparrows, of which five are sold for two farthings, are not forgotten by God; our hairs are numbered, and not one falls without His knowledge.

But divine Providence is outside good and evil, making no distinction between the good and the bad; the one and the other receive like favours; they are alike refreshed by the dew that descends from Hermon; the same showers blown up from the sea swell the fountains, whence they slake their thirst and irrigate their fields. Jesus, revealer of God the Father, in no way bettered the material condition of those who were His disciples. On the contrary, He foretells that they will suffer persecution and violent death. Nor did He ask for Himself any exemption from the common lot of men, or any immunity from misfortune. Around Him and about Him the laws of nature grind on indifferent; they vex the little

theocratic people, whose hope in God had never grown weary. He did not suspend those laws, nor turn their course aside to save His own divine life. Even in the probable interest of the work of redemption He did not invoke a miracle from heaven to change the appointed order, and to control the conjunction of the forces of nature, of national policy, and of religious passion. In the hour which He foreknew, He was seized in their brutal grip; without a murmur He accepted death, submitting to a higher will in order to ends of salvation.

Do we ever surprise upon His lips the human complaint which saddens and darkens the poet's hymns of joy, even the gayest and the lightest, the complaint which is never wanting, in every age, in all social conditions, and every state of culture? The dolorous struggles which cut across the life of the good man wrestling with injustice, his despairing lamentation when senseless death strikes him in his youth, in the flower of his strength and devotion; did these ever move His heart? We read anxiously a question which His disciples put to Him when a certain disaster was reported to Him. He is told that some Galileans<sup>1</sup> had been butchered at the feast of the Pasch, "whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices." The apostles imagined that their countrymen were thus cruelly chastised because they were greater sinners than others. "No," says Jesus; "but unless you shall do penance, you shall all like-

<sup>1</sup> Luke xiii. 1-5.

wise perish. Or those eighteen upon whom the tower fell in Siloe and slew them, think you that they also were debtors above all the men that dwell in Jerusalem? No, I say to you ; but except you do penance, you shall all likewise perish." Accidents, disasters, according to the Saviour, are not to be interpreted as proofs of moral culpability. He takes the opportunity presented by these two incidents to adjure the crowd about Him to do penance at the moment when events are hurrying on, and the crisis is approaching. But to the question regarding the ways of God in the government of the world He gives no reply. We make bold to say that He was not to be expected to answer, and this avowal will not surprise those who are versed in the spirit of the gospel, who understand the nature of the mission of Jesus, and the scope of His revelation. It was rather His business, as the Saviour sent from God to teach men the way of salvation, to insist upon the need for repentance and return to God. He seems to suggest that the question is idle and useless, and in terms of grave warning which sound like censure, He commands His disciples to look higher, and to transfer their inquisitiveness into another domain—that of the kingdom of God. The government of divine Providence in the order of nature appears in the teaching of Jesus inscribed within a circle, the vast extent of which He himself reveals, which in its totality is at the service of a superior plan ; and that plan is the supernatural order. Only in this



order is Providence explained : in it alone, and in its laws, is the disconcerting course of the laws of nature resolved. Jesus tells the crowd to look higher. Following His example, we ignore the question, and hear what the Master has to say about the mysteries of the kingdom of God.

The love of the Father which He makes known has for its end the salvation of men, the terminus of which is the vision of God and unbroken union with His everlasting life. In this revelation humanity is securely launched upon the path to its supereminent destiny ; in it we see the whole scheme of grace. This love is unsolicited, spontaneous ; it surpasses the exigencies of human nature ; no effort of man can attain to it. The new sentiments which animate the sons of God, the children of the kingdom, the guests of the everlasting banquet, are not innate ; they do not spring from human nature as their source ; they are not the outcome of a mysterious elaboration of our human faculties ; they come from God, whose love leads to the communication of itself, which is grace, the principle of affiliation.

The gift, therefore, is evidently of the supernatural order.<sup>1</sup> It is especially so, in that it creates in the

<sup>1</sup> Harnack has noted these marks of the kingdom of God in *Das Wesen des Christentums*. "What was shown forth as its essence in the preaching of the kingdom of God has survived. It must be considered in a threefold sense. First, the kingdom of God is supernatural—a gift from above—and not a produce of natural life ; second, it is a purely religious good, the inner union with the living God ; third, it is the most important, nay, the most positive, thing a man can

soul the new organism of a new life. God, to be possessed as He is, is the terminus of that life. He also becomes its exemplar; and Jesus enumerates and explains His attributes, in order that the Father in heaven may be the ideal motive force determining the activity that is in us in consequence of the transcendent end to which we are addressed. The divine life begins in the disciple on earth, when he has prepared his heart by penitence to receive the gift of God. We have gathered together here all the elements of this regime of grace which are found scattered through the synoptic gospels. Under archaic formulæ, borrowed from contemporary literature, which the time and place imposed upon Him, Jesus introduced, and in a manner enfolded, the whole economy of the supernatural order; and when, later, St. Paul and St. John required to explain the gospel to Greeks, it was sufficient for them to strip off the Jewish envelope, in order to bring to light the full and living substance of the teaching delivered upon the mountain, and on the shores of the sea of Tiberias.

The Messianic time had been conceived by the prophets as a spontaneous manifestation of the love of God. Isaias' well-known description refers to the inauguration of it; sight given to the blind, the release of the captive, the healing of broken

experience, for it permeates and controls the entire sphere of his being, because it is the forgiveness of sin, the destruction of misery," p. 40. (*What is Christianity?* p. 61, foot.)

hearts, the year of grace, the holy year, sacred to the worship of the Lord. That prophecy had to be both truth and emblem; it was above all emblem, since the miracles were merely ephemeral accessories, bound to pass away; they had their effect at the time upon the crowd, which was looking for an all-powerful wonder-worker. They caused a momentary impulse towards the historical personage, without securing the attachment of the hearers and witnesses. They were no more than mere adjuncts, the frame of the tablet on which are inscribed the spiritual benefits, the moral revelation, the gift of supernatural life. The prophets, and especially Isaias, the greatest of them, provided Him with a text, a theme; they did not give Him the genius, the inspiration which, according to us, flowed from His divine nature.

What, then, is a child of God, and how should he live? Jesus Himself is the highest representative of the type, He who has the plenitude of that which we enjoy by participation. We must ask Him. Each of us draws, according to the measure of his vessel, from the fountain of divine life of which He opened the source. His measure was infinite, He drank from that fountain to an extent to which we cannot attain. He remains the model Son of God; and the meditation of His words, and more particularly of His life, as He lived it, is and will ever be the aliment of those who have attached themselves to Him. Grace and truth are by Jesus Christ, wrote the author of the fourth gospel; that is to say, the

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only Son of the Father made God known to the world, gave it God. That is the revelation of the paternity of God. When, having studied this revelation, and analysed the idea of the prophet who made it, we ask ourselves if humanity has really understood it ; whether, having understood it, it has raised itself or transformed its life, we are filled with wonder. There is the sorrowful impression that we are still a minority in the human caravan, looking for something beyond sensible needs ; but this gives way before the joy of being in the forefront of the holy procession of those who are on the march towards the divine, led by an infallible and all-powerful guide: of having, through unshakable faith in Him, the certitude that at the end is God, by whom we shall be welcomed as sons. The words which He spoke to His disciples ring in our ears as an invitation not to be refused. He promised them that they should find in God a love surpassing all the loves of this world. "Call none your father upon earth, for one is your Father, who is in heaven."

This is the name by which Jesus addressed Him who rules the world, Him whose designs are for us impenetrable, who leads us by the instrumentality of forces which He seems not to wish to control. Anxious as to the issue of our lives, harassed by the uncertainty of impotent reason, let us dare to do as He did. We shall not solve the problem of Providence unless, like Him, we cast ourselves into the supernatural order. At the apex of that order

He has placed a new resplendent God—God the Father. He bids us invoke Him by this title. If every religion has a prayer, or better, *is* a prayer, the religion of Jesus Christ is the religion of the pater-nity of God ; that is to say, the Love of God.

The disciple of the Saviour reaches his heavenly Father with one movement of his soul ; recourse to him is sure, direct, and irresistible. He is certain of being heard ; he knows that help will come to him, that beyond dolorous and brutal death arms of love are stretched out awaiting him. If in a moment of surprise and affright he should ask God to take away from him the cup which is too bitter, when the supernatural sentiments have had time to react, he will yet quit this life saying, like the Christ : Father, thy will be done ; Father, into thy hands I commit my soul.

## V

### THE SON OF MAN

WE devoted an earlier chapter to the study of the kingdom of God, for the reason that the founding of that kingdom was the chief work of Jesus Christ. Our object now is to isolate the Saviour's personality, to analyse the statements He made to His contemporaries concerning Himself, and find out what they contain. The course of the inquiry will show whether we have been well advised in adopting this order. In the synoptic gospels the rich enumeration of miracles and the elaborate discourses touching the work of the kingdom of God appear to promise precious details concerning the person of Jesus and His daily life ; in reality, only a few texts have been collected and preserved. These merit careful examination.

Jesus allowed Himself to be called the Christ. He accepted the confession which He had elicited, and declared to the believing apostle that his intuition was true, since it had been inspired by the heavenly Father. He called God His Father, and spoke of Himself as the only Son of God ; He declared that He knew this, and that this knowledge was the



hidden all-powerful motive of His religious activity. In the name of this knowledge He required faith in His words, in the means of salvation which He proposed, and in His person. The personage stands alone in history, and men are astounded at His high unequivocal claims. If a new star appeared in our firmament to lighten the journey of the first adorers coming from the East to Bethlehem to see the Son of God, in the heaven of prophets and religious founders, the Messianic star appeared incomparable in its brightness, in the radiant clearness of its light. For every truly religious mind it is the only one which yet shines. Jesus Christ attracted to His person not only His own people, to whom the promise of a Saviour had been given, but all men, for whose sake He extended the paternity of God, to whom without distinction He opened the door of the kingdom which He founded. If we would discover what is to be understood by the consciousness of the Christ of God, and what is the full extent of His claims, we must group the statements which the Saviour made concerning Himself, and weigh them in order to determine their import as a whole.

The scene which took place outside Galilee, in the pagan country of Cæsarea Philippi,<sup>1</sup> is momentous in the life of Jesus. It is interesting to the critical historian, less perhaps on account of the promises made to St. Peter that he should be the corner-stone of the new Church, than as a testimony to the

<sup>1</sup> Mark viii. 27-33; Matthew xvi. 13-23; Luke ix. 18-22.

popular beliefs which had been formed about the person of Jesus and the tardy revelation now made of His identity as the Messiah, the Son of God.

The synoptic evangelists attach exceptional importance to it, and have assigned to it a prominent position. All three present it in the same fashion; not only do they give it an identical geographical setting, but the chronology is the same, and they have supplied it with a context of facts and speeches closely connected together; and thus they mark a precise date. The preaching of Galilee is practically over. Jesus has left His country for good. He will not see it again except in passing, and His sojourn will be very short, for the moment of His "assumption"<sup>1</sup> is come. "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem," where He is to die.

"And Jesus<sup>2</sup> went out, and His disciples, into the town of Cæsarea Philippi; and on the way He asked His disciples, saying to them: Whom do men say that I am? Who answered Him, saying: John the Baptist; but some, Elias; and others, one of the prophets." When the series of hypotheses and popular identifications is complete, He puts another question: "But whom do you say that I am? Peter answering said to Him: Thou art the Christ. And He strictly charged them that they should not tell any man of Him."

There is the scene—very short and, to all appearance, very clear. We wish to draw from it certain

<sup>1</sup> Luke ix. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Mark, *l.c.*

inferences which illustrate and define the different phases of the Saviour's mission, placing in a new light the work of His whole life and the partial revelations He had made concerning Himself. It is evident from the dialogue that the crowds had not identified in Jesus the expected Messiah. Despite His personal ascendancy, the sovereign authority of His words, and the newness of His doctrines, despite the clearness of certain points of that doctrine upon the opening of the Messianic age and the spiritual nature of the kingdom of God, they did not know, nor even suspect, that Jesus might be the Messiah, at the time when the preaching in Galilee had come to an end, at the moment when the evangelists close that apostolate and begin to describe the last journey to Jerusalem.

Jesus, no doubt, was the greatest of the prophets, but no more than a prophet. In the eyes of the people He did not go beyond His predecessors, whose genius He had inherited, without perhaps being equal with them either in the number and importance of His miracles, or the asceticism of His life. On the other hand, He lived in a time nearer to the kingdom of God, though He had no mission to inaugurate and found that kingdom ; He did not fulfil the rôle assigned, in the popular imagination, to the coming Messiah. His preaching seems an echo of John the Baptist's : to urge repentance and the conversion of hearts ; to cut straight roads, fill up ravines, and level the hills before the Lord who is

about to reveal Himself to His people. The people think He is John the Baptist come back to life. According to others, He is Elias, expected since the time of Malachias<sup>1</sup> "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of Yahweh," or perhaps one of the prophets. To His contemporaries, His work is that of one preparing for the Messianic time, and He is looked upon as a forerunner. They think that He will have to efface Himself before a greater personality; that He marks a transition, and that His work once finished, He will give place to one mightier than Himself.

Perhaps in the beginning He was expected to contribute personally to the Messianic work itself; but He did not fulfil the program which had been worked out in the synagogues, and dreamed of in the apocalypses; and that is why He was identified with John, with Elias, with one of the prophets. The true character of His mission was not apprehended by the people; they did not observe the progression of His statements regarding the time of the kingdom of God, though it had been clearly marked. In the early days the announcement had been: "the kingdom of God is near"; by degrees another had been substituted: "the kingdom of God is come";<sup>2</sup> and finally it was: "the kingdom of God is within you."<sup>3</sup> If the crowd failed to notice the gradation of the messages and to note the spiritual nature of

<sup>1</sup> Malachias iv. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xi. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xvii. 21.

the new sovereignty, still less could it penetrate the thoughts of Jesus, or clearly decipher the names which He assumed. From the beginning of His preaching He shrouded His personality under the mysterious title of Son of man; at different times He was proclaimed Son of God; He declared Himself the Son of God. Son of man, Son of God; these are the titles Jesus claims; which exalt His person and separate it from humanity. We propose to analyse these titles, in order to arrive at what they contain, and to discover what relationship they bear to that of Messiah.

## I

The texts in which Jesus assumes the title Son of man may be arranged in three groups. In the first we collect those which have to do with the human life and the apostolate of the Saviour:<sup>1</sup> "the Son of man hath not where to lay His head" . . . . "the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins" . . . . "the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath" . . . . "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." The second<sup>2</sup> embraces those texts which tell of the sufferings and passion of the Saviour: "the Son of man must suffer many things" . . . . "the Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men" . . . . "the Son of man indeed goeth, as it is

<sup>1</sup> Matthew viii. 20; Mark ii. 10; Mark ii. 28; Luke xix. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Mark viii. 31; ix. 30; xiv. 21.

written of Him ; but woe to that man by whom the Son of man shall be betrayed." In the third series<sup>1</sup> the title is associated with the Parousia and the final triumph: " then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven " . . . . " when the Son of man shall come in His majesty, and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the seat of His majesty."

This classification exhibits in three aspects the career of the Son of man. Is it not clear from these texts that the work thus distributed is a specific work of Jesus as the Son of man, the performance of which will be in obedience to, and conformity with, a plan ordained beforehand? Must we not admit that the Saviour, in assuming the title, took upon Himself a character, and claimed rights for Himself, which go beyond any ordinary scheme of human life? We see from this classification what must be the character of the solution of this difficult problem: it must be broad enough to suit the three classes of work; it will be insufficient if it be not applicable to all. This is the first of our premises.

Another starting-point is furnished by the personal and exclusive use of this title by the Saviour. The evangelists refrained from employing it in the narrative portions of their writings. It is only found on the lips of Jesus Himself. One might think that the apostles and evangelists had agreed (and that the Church kept the agreement in mind) that the use of this title should not be continued, but be allowed to

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xxiv. 30; xxv. 31.



drop. If St. Stephen, according to the Acts,<sup>1</sup> and St. James, according to Hegesippus,<sup>2</sup> see the heavens open and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God, it is because their memory goes back to the vision of Jesus Himself, and reproduces the title He used of Himself. The author of the Apocalypse,<sup>3</sup> fond as he is of surprising and mysterious titles, never describes Jesus by the name Son of man. The title is associated, as we have seen, with the Parousia, so that one idea awakes the other naturally. St. Paul,<sup>4</sup> in whom, at the beginning of his apostolate, the expectation of the day of the Lord is dominant, who knows the classical *logia* of the Son of man coming with the majesty of God, seems to have avoided this title intentionally, and to have dissociated it from the idea of the second coming ; it is the *Lord* who comes, not the Son of man. When he speaks of the second man, from heaven,<sup>5</sup> he makes no allusion to the Son of man ; but to the heavenly man, second in the order of time, he opposes the first man, who was of the earth. Jesus alone calls Himself the Son of man ; all the disciples shunned the use of the formula ; this fact requires explanation.

Lietzmann<sup>6</sup> thinks that this title, since it cannot be found in the writings of the apostles or the early Fathers, was unknown to them ; and that Jesus never

<sup>1</sup> Acts of the Apostles vii. 56.

<sup>2</sup> Eusebius, *Church History*, ii. 23.

<sup>3</sup> i. 13 and xiv. 14 are to be referred to Daniel vii. 13 and x. 5.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 16 ; 2 Thess. i. 7.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Corinth. xv. 47.

<sup>6</sup> *Der Menschensohn*, 1896.

used it of Himself. His opinion is that the Messianic interpretation of the vision of Daniel gave currency to this new name in the Helleno-Christian churches, whence by degrees it crept into the text of the gospel, where it was substituted for the personal pronouns "I" and "me." This solution of the difficulty is judged by everyone to be too drastic. Is it not possible, by going to the primitive tradition, by examining the interpretation which the Christian Church, whether Greek or Latin, gave to the formula  $\acute{o} \nu\iota\acute{o}\varsigma \tau\omicron\upsilon \alpha\nu\theta\rho\acute{\omega}\pi\omicron\upsilon$ , to discover why it was excluded? Almost all the Fathers<sup>1</sup> are agreed that the Saviour intended, by the use of this name, to designate His human nature and to emphasise the humility of His sensible appearance; and that as the title no longer fitted the risen and glorified Saviour, the use of it was therefore discontinued. It seems to us that as regards Greek writers, the motive for avoiding the use of this formula was the sense of the Greek translation  $\acute{o} \nu\iota\acute{o}\varsigma \tau\omicron\upsilon \alpha\nu\theta\rho\acute{\omega}\pi\omicron\upsilon$ ; this means literally *a man born of a man, who had a man for a father*. We can understand what misconceptions might have ensued, to what error the formula in Greek might have given rise.

In any case the title appeared with Jesus, and with Him disappeared. It is an interesting fact that it was not known as a synonym for Messiah, nor understood

<sup>1</sup> Ignatius, Justin, Irenæus, Origen, Eusebius, Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, Cyril of Alexandria, Chrysostom, Tertullian, Cyprian, Ambrose, Augustine. Cf. Lietzmann, pp. 69-80.

as a Messianic designation. In the account of the confession of St. Peter, as St. Matthew presents it, Jesus puts His question in these terms: "Whom do men say that the Son of man is?" We know the reply; no one suspects Him to be the Messiah. The title Son of man, therefore, had suggested to no one that Jesus was the envoy of God. Again, the Saviour carefully avoided calling Himself the Messiah. He expressly forbade His disciples to repeat to anyone the avowal made at Cæsarea. But from the very first He takes the name of Son of man; He presents Himself to the Jewish world with this qualification, which may be called His title of investiture, which recurs on almost every page of the gospels. The expression Son of man was not then regarded as a synonym of Christ. It is found, however, in the book of Enoch with an unmistakably Messianic sense, as the simple equivalent of the word Messiah, for which it is substituted: "And I asked the angel<sup>1</sup> who came to me and showed me all the hidden things concerning the Son of man, who He was, whence He came, why He walked with the Ancient of days." "As to the Son of man, He appeared sitting upon the throne of His glory." Some eminent critics think the book of the Similitudes,

<sup>1</sup> Allegories xxxvii.-lxxi. The date of these parts of the book of Enoch is so uncertain, says Schürer (*Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes*, ii. 512), that it is useless to take it into account in the historical development of the Messianic hopes. They were written, according to Dr. Charles, from the year 35 to 64 B.C. But this date remains purely hypothetical.

whence these texts are taken, posterior to the Christian era. Some even regard it as having been influenced by the new revelation, as being imbued with its teaching and terminology. If, on the contrary, it were necessary to assign to these parts of the book of Enoch a date anterior to Jesus Christ, should we be authorised in supposing that the Saviour had borrowed from them? In the first place we must maintain intact the conclusion which we have established with the help of the gospels themselves, that the crowd does not know that the name is a Messianic title; it cannot even possibly suspect it, for St. Matthew seems intentionally to make an antithesis between the Son of man and Christ the Son of God; and if St. Peter dares to identify them, it is by revelation of the heavenly Father. Further, the influence of the book of Enoch upon the doctrine of Jesus Christ cannot be proved. The Saviour and the author of the vision may each have had in mind the vision of Daniel. Each may have derived from it, if not the idea, at least the broad conception of a Messianic program, without our being required to suppose mutual dependence. Besides, there is substantial divergence between the two programs. In the apocryphal document the activity of the Son of man is confined to a supra-terrestrial sphere; He does not leave His throne beside the "Ancient of days." The Son of man of the gospel comes to mingle really with humanity, under the form of man, to save and pardon, to suffer

and redeem. If they drew from the same source, they did so at different points, and different waters fed and fructified their genius. The Apocalypse of Enoch was conceived under a sky other than that of Galilee, and not in the same atmosphere as the sermon on the mount and the parables of the Lake of Tiberias. Jesus seems to have put this title in circulation for the first time ; taking it, He stamped His impress upon it ; it was for the specific works of Jesus to reveal progressively what the Son of man was.

## II

We are seeking to discover the sense Jesus Christ gave to the title Son of man, whence He derived it, and why, when speaking to His contemporaries, He used it of Himself. At the beginning of His apostolate He publicly called Himself the Son of man.<sup>1</sup> He never gave any explanation of the significance of the title ; on the other hand, the crowd does not seem to have asked any. We must conclude from this silence that Jesus expected to be understood, and that the thoughts of His hearers on the subject were in some measure consonant with His own. We must note also that the Saviour declares certain acts of His life to be peculiar acts of the Son of man : the Son of man has power to forgive sins ; the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath ; the Son of man is

<sup>1</sup> Mark ii. 10.

come to save that which was lost; the Son of man is to suffer many things; the Son of man is going to death, as it is written of Him. Have not these statements a determinative value? We think that the different tasks which lie upon Jesus as the Son of man, and the prerogatives He enjoyed in that character, were essentially connected with the specific work entrusted to Him, and that the crowd had some idea of what that work was. Jesus, speaking Aramaic, must have designated Himself by the word *barnasha*.<sup>1</sup> Now this word is only found in poetic and prophetic diction; it means, literally, not the son of a man, but one who has the attributes of a man, a member of humanity. In the Old Testament<sup>2</sup> it is used to emphasise the weakness, fragility, and mortality of man. It is frequent in Ezechiel, occurring about eighty times. God, addressing His prophet by this name, wishes to remind him of his impotence and nothingness, and to induce in him a disposition of humility and submission. Jesus did not understand the expression in this sense, which in no way satisfies the different phases of the work of the Son of man, and may therefore be dismissed. The title also occurs in the well-known vision of Daniel,<sup>3</sup> where it stands out in strong relief to personify the sovereignty of God, and of His saints. The prophet gives a symbolical description of the

<sup>1</sup> Dalman, *The Words of Jesus*, 234 ss.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm viii. 4; Numbers xxiii. 19; Job xvi. 21; xxv. 6.

<sup>3</sup> vii. 13, 14, 27.



kingdoms of the world, which he represents as beasts coming up out of the abyss ; at last he sees, as it were, a human form descend from heaven, to reign for ever : " I beheld therefore in the vision of the night ; and lo, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and he came even to the Ancient of days, and they presented him before Him. And He gave him power, and glory, and a kingdom ; and all peoples, tribes, and tongues shall serve him ; his power is an everlasting power that shall not be taken away, and his kingdom that shall not be destroyed." It is beyond question that in this vision the Son of man directly personifies the whole people of Israel, the saints of the Most High, just as the beasts are the symbols of the pagan kingdoms hostile to God. By degrees the title was restricted to the founder of the kingdom alone. The prophecy itself suggests this exegesis : " These four great beasts are four kings." <sup>1</sup> The Son of man would soon designate him who was at the head of the kingdom of God, whose mission it was to found it. In the East, as in ancient monarchies elsewhere, the empire is the emperor, the kingdom is the king, the state is the diffused power of the ruler.

There are weighty convergent indications that the vision of Daniel often occurred to the mind of Jesus Christ ; for example, in the apocalyptic utterance : <sup>2</sup> " And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven ; and then shall all the tribes of the earth

<sup>1</sup> vii. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew xxiv. 30.

mourn ; and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great majesty." Again, when the Saviour is brought before the Sanhedrin, and has to explain His mission, the high priest puts the formal question :<sup>1</sup> " I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us if thou be the Christ. Jesus saith to him : Thou hast said it. Nevertheless I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven." The scene, the form, the style are the same. The personage bears the same name, it is the Son of man, and he appears "in the clouds of heaven"; as in the vision of Daniel, He takes His place beside God Himself ; he has glory, dominion, omnipotence. The allusion is most evident. That vision, besides, seems to remain constantly in the minds of the Jewish people ; it inspired the feverish expectation of the kingdom of God which disturbed them in the time of John the Baptist. It was a steadfast beacon fire, the regular flashes of which light up the conceptions of the Saviour's contemporaries ; it was the canvas upon which their ardent imagination found expression ; it furnished language and symbols, the personages and the rôles to be filled. Far be it from us to suggest that the Saviour drew from it His inspiration as the Messiah. It is so vague, so supraterritorial, that He could scarcely have borrowed from it the barest outline of a plan of action. The divine

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xxvi. 64.

intuitions of His intellect and His heart completely transformed the vision which His contemporaries interpreted and amplified in so material a sense; He clothed it with a new morality, with a conception of human life, in which suffering and death had assigned to them a definite place. The Saviour wished His hearers to understand Him, He wished to be closely in touch with them, to find a means of communication, all the more necessary in that His teaching ran directly counter to their point of view. This seems to us the true motive of the allusions made by the Saviour to the vision of Daniel. To describe His future triumph, Jesus draws the attention, both of the apostles when unfolding His apocalypse to them, and of the High Priest when requested by him to declare if He be the Christ, to the symbol of the Son of man foreseen in a dream by the prophet Daniel. Thence then He took His title. But why should He have taken upon Him this mysterious and almost impersonal name? Why did He cast aside the title of Messiah, requiring of His disciples absolute secrecy with regard to the confession of Cæsarea? We think we may reply: Jesus took the title Son of man because of its essential connection with the kingdom of God, to found which was the fundamental work of His life.

It is necessary to elucidate this important part of our inquiry.

Everyone knows that the synoptic evangelists made little or no effort to group the acts and sayings of

the Saviour according to any objective and real scheme, or to understand them from anything like a general point of view. Nevertheless, we must ask ourselves whether the utterances of Jesus do not exhibit the connection of a general plan, whether all the acts of His apostolate were not determined by a dominant idea. Without such dominant idea giving organic unity to His sayings and miracles, His life would seem disconnected and disjointed, and He Himself would appear, not as a prophet having within Himself the living source of His inspiration, but as one capable at the most of receiving intermittent revelations. Jesus did not present Himself to His contemporaries as a man who did not know what to say and do. To preach and to found the kingdom of God was His single object and His unremitting task. The kingdom of God appears upon the threshold of the synoptic gospels, and the reader must keep it constantly in view, otherwise he will run the risk of being benighted in the obscurity of the details, of not comprehending the precise import of the discourses, which are often truncated and lifted bodily from their context; it is the key by which alone we are able to perceive the breadth and depth of the conceptions of Jesus. St. Mark, who seems to have preserved the primitive shape of the early preaching, narrates that, after the imprisonment of John the Baptist, Jesus went into Galilee, preaching the good news of God, saying: "The time is accomplished, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent

and believe the gospel." In the same gospel the kingdom of God is only mentioned otherwise in the parabolic teaching; nevertheless, it is evidently the Saviour's constant preoccupation. Now Daniel may be looked upon as the prophet of the kingdom of God. He it was who awoke the expectation of it, who inspired all those descriptions of it in which the Pharisees and the authors of the apocalypses delighted; the literary derivation as regards the kingdom is incontestable: "In the days of those kingdoms, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and His kingdom shall not be delivered up to another people, and it shall break in pieces and consume all those kingdoms, and itself shall stand for ever."<sup>1</sup>

If, again, according to the same prophet, the kingdom of Heaven is personified by a Son of man who is its founder and inaugurator, we need not be surprised that Jesus should have adopted the name Son of man. He had undertaken the work and assumed the functions; should he not also take the title? This hypothesis would be practically unshakable, and might be looked upon as satisfactory, but for the want of substructure; one cannot see upon what it is to be set, or what basis one can give it. No adequate support for it is to be found in the gospels. Let us consider the facts. Jesus, if He assumed the title in the hope of stirring the curiosity of His contemporaries and leading them to suspect

<sup>1</sup> ii. 44.

the mysterious Being concealed under His human physiognomy, was not understood by them, and did not succeed in His wish ; if for their sakes He recalled the familiar vision of Daniel, and met them upon common ground, it was with the wish to avoid complete rupture with them ; yet, notwithstanding this, the rupture took place. The Son of man, the prophet, the wonder-worker, whom they heard and saw, was to them no more than a man ; they did not recognise in Him the Son of man of Daniel, appearing in the clouds of heaven, sitting at the right hand of God. They may have been surprised to find an unusual and poetical expression upon the lips of Jesus, but the extent and duration of that astonishment must not be exaggerated ; the prophets affected far-fetched titles ; they were often expected to lend themselves to strange characters and outlandish postures ; people would soon have grown accustomed to hear the prophet of Nazareth describe Himself by the name Son of man. They would have understood by it that He wished to give prominence to His man's nature, to minimise the supernatural attributes attached to His avocation as a prophet. It is enough to run over the texts in which the Son of man acts and speaks, to get a notion of the popular beliefs. In the early days of His ministry Jesus declared that the Son of man had power to forgive sins, and as a sign of that power He cured a paralytic under the eyes of the crowd and the murmuring Pharisees. The witnesses of that miracle were stupe-



fied. "We never saw the like;"<sup>1</sup> "they were filled with fear, saying: We have seen wonderful things to-day," St. Luke reports. What was the strange thing, the "*παράδοξα*"?<sup>2</sup> It was to see a man, who claimed no other title but that of Son of man, in the character of man, remit sins. They would not have been surprised to hear Him pardon sins in the name of God, in virtue of the supernatural power accompanying His mission as a prophet. A man who forgives sin, that is the paradox. "And the multitude seeing it feared, and glorified God, that gave such power to men."<sup>3</sup> In the confession of St. Peter St. Matthew seems to indicate a contrast between the Son of man and Christ the Son of God. In order to bridge the distance separating the two characters, divine revelation was necessary. Jesus, in declaring Himself the Son of man, chose a title which furnished no suggestion of His mysterious nature and His character as the Messiah. Besides, to forbid those who heard the confession of Peter to speak of it would have been vain and purposeless if He had already revealed Himself as the Son of man of Daniel's vision. The Saviour Himself contrasts the attributes of the Son of man and His own divinity when He explains the nature of the sin against the Holy Ghost. To say that the spirit by which He drives out devils is the wicked spirit is to blaspheme the Spirit of God, and that blasphemy is unpardon-

<sup>1</sup> Mark ii. 12.<sup>2</sup> Luke v. 26.<sup>3</sup> Matthew ix. 8.

able; while to despise the Son of man and sin against Him is a pardonable sin. The Son of man declares Himself Lord of the Sabbath. This lordship, according to the strict exegesis of the text of St. Mark, has devolved upon man. The Sabbath was instituted for man's advantage; whenever it is not to man's advantage and becomes harmful, its obligation disappears; the man therefore interprets the will of God, he does not violate it. The Saviour justifies His words, His miracles, His command to the paralytic to take up his bed, by quoting the example of David who, with his companions, ate the bread consecrated to God and reserved for the priests.

Here is a difficulty which seems all but insuperable. On the one hand, Jesus adopted a title which, according to His intention and plan, is a Messianic title, which only the founder of the kingdom of God can claim; on the other hand, the crowd never understood it as such. The humble, unobtrusive personage in no way suggested the Son of man as seen by Daniel in the glory of God. The Messianic value of the title was, however, understood once, when Jesus was questioned by the Sanhedrin. St. Luke's account of it is specially deserving of our attention:<sup>1</sup> "If thou be the Christ, tell us. And He said to them: If I shall tell you, you will not believe Me . . . but hereafter the Son of man shall be sitting on the right hand of the power of God. Then said they all: Art Thou then the Son of God? Who said:

<sup>1</sup> xxii. 66.

You say that I am. And they said: What need we any further testimony? For we ourselves have heard it from His own mouth." According to St. Luke, Jesus does not answer directly that He is the Christ: He evokes the Son of man seated at the right hand of God, He declares Himself the Son of man. All comprehend that He refers to the vision of Daniel, that He is the Son of God. The riddle is solved, in part at least. If those who came in contact with the Saviour during His apostolate were not led to compare the title He chose for Himself with the same title as it occurs in the prophet's vision, it was because He did not, in their idea, carry out the program which Daniel had sketched, nor incarnate the superhuman personage seen by the prophet moving in a divine sphere. Jesus furnished the living commentary of the prophecy; He wished to make His contemporaries understand that the coming of the Son of man upon the clouds is not the only act, and still less the initial act, of the foundation of the kingdom of God. He revealed to them—and it was a true revelation in the strict sense of the word—that the Son of man will unfold His life in three phases: His humble and silent appearance, His voluntary endurance of suffering and death, at last His glorious coming to complete the work of redemption. "The Son of man<sup>1</sup> must suffer many things, and be rejected by the ancients and chief priests and scribes, and be killed,

<sup>1</sup> Luke ix. 22.

and the third day rise again." We may therefore conclude :

That the Saviour called Himself the Son of man because this title belonged to Him as the founder of the kingdom of God.

That it was not understood as a Messianic title by the hearers of Jesus, because the Saviour did not at once fulfil the rôle assigned by the prophet to the Son of man seated at the right hand of God.

That it was enough for Him to claim this glorious title, for His character as the Messiah, the Son of God, to flash upon the Sanhedrists. If those who witnessed the three years' apostolate did not observe that He inaugurated and founded the kingdom of God, it need not surprise us to find that they did not understand the title Son of man.

Why did He not unfurl the Messianic standard over the kingdom of God, the reader asks, surprised at finding a gap of three years between the beginning of His apostolate and His revelation as the Christ? We must remember that the word Messiah had become, through the excitement of national ambitions, a political cry. The name, the etymology of which has never agreed with its sense, lends itself to all kinds of significations, to those furthest from its original meaning, even to the most extravagant. It had been in a way appropriated by the Pharisees ; they had cunningly transformed it into a symbol of the national aspiration, which embodied political emancipation and the inauguration of a kingdom

without end ; in that kingdom moral and religious considerations would take a lower place, while the temple and the law would be maintained as the chief instruments of purification and sanctification. Jesus in the desert repudiated this expectation ; He had also to refuse the title. How could a name possibly concern Him which still called up, even in the most purified and upright minds, the vision of political power and conquest by arms ? Later, when He shall have founded the kingdom of God in men's souls, not by bringing back the dispersed tribes to Palestine ; when He shall have shown that the country of His kingdom is the heart which has been reconciled to God, and not the land of Jerusalem the holy ; when it is understood that salvation is redemption from sin and evil, and not deliverance from the yoke of Rome ; then He will take the title of Messiah. He will then have delivered it from the popular misconception, have transmuted it and given it a new significance. The work of Jesus was not to be expressed by that dangerous, equivocal title ; His personality was more accurately described by His relation to the kingdom of God, connoted by the title Son of man, and still better, by that of Son of God. For Christians of pagan origin, for all who were not Hebrews and sons of Hebrews, who had not toyed with the profane dream of a Son of David, whose mission it was to give to Israel the empire of the world, to maintain the law as the principle of the moral life, and the temple as the seat of the religious

life, the title of Messiah was without importance. The Greek took no interest in the apostle's proofs that Jesus was the Christ; he only understood them after long explanation. His attention was arrested on the contrary, when Jesus was represented to him as the Son of God. The Saviour could only retain that name by emptying it of its Messianic value. When He declared Himself the Messiah to His disciples and to the chief priest, He wished to say that He was "He who was to come," that it was useless to expect another prophet, or any other intervention of God in human affairs, that He was the last revealer of the heavenly Father, the founder of a universal, final religion. For us even to-day the formula "Jesus is the Christ" has no other sense.



## VI

### THE SON OF GOD

WE pointed out the deviation which the Greek language imposes on the Semitic formula "Son of man"; we saw that this title, which exactly describes an individual belonging to humanity, a human being, was rejected by Greek readers because the translation *ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου* signified "a man born of a man."

Jesus called Himself the Son of God; Hellenic or Hellenist Christians understood that He was born of God. We wish now to ask ourselves if we are not in the presence of an analogous deviation, and if the faith of the Church in the Saviour, the Son of God, because He is the Word of God, pre-existing with God and consubstantial with Him, is not in like manner the result of a bias in the formula, a misunderstanding on the part of a translator.

Such misunderstanding and transformation are not inconceivable, since the Greek genius, so far from fixing, like the Semitic, an impassable barrier between God and man, was even yet at that time swelling its pantheon, multiplying apotheoses, lending itself even to divine incarnations. The Aramaic

formula signifies, but without precision, that Jesus partook of the divine nature; it is our business to find out what measure of divinity Jesus claimed for Himself, and to form a judgment concerning the nature and essence of that divinity. Was this title a metaphor derived from, and suggested by, the Old Testament? Was the titular the Son of God merely because holiness and power, attributes of God, were reflected in Him more perfectly than in any other of the children of men, because He was favoured with a larger endowment of the love and special solicitude of a beneficent and condescending Providence? Or, was He so much lifted above humanity as to be the like and equal of God, a God-man, a God? Was the Aramaic formula exactly translated and not exceeded by the Greek title *ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ*? This is the problem which we propose to solve with the help of the synoptic gospels and such texts as the critics, and even the more advanced among them, regard as authentic.

## I

Jesus called Himself the Son of God, or more exactly, He spoke of God as His Father, and of Himself as the Son of God. Voices from heaven also pointed Him out as the Son of God; and His contemporaries, in different circumstances, gave Him this title, associating it with that of Messiah. We think it advisable at once to make a division between

the testimonies which proceeded from the consciousness of the Saviour Himself and those which came from without. We put the former aside for later examination, for they have a special character and a greater breadth of significance.

This title was uttered for the first time by the angel;<sup>1</sup> the heavenly envoy announces to Mary that her Son shall be called the Son of the Most High; and, later on, that the Holy One that shall be born of her shall be called the Son of God, because He is conceived by the Holy Ghost. At the Baptism,<sup>2</sup> and at the Transfiguration,<sup>3</sup> the voice from heaven consecrates Jesus as the Son of God, and manifests Him as such. Wicked spirits, first in the desert,<sup>4</sup> and afterwards in the course of His exorcisms,<sup>5</sup> suspect, and even know, Him to be the Son of God. In the night of the tempest, after He had reached the boat by walking upon the water, and stilled the wind, His disciples fell upon their knees; "they were far more astonished within themselves," says St. Mark.<sup>6</sup> They said to Him: "Indeed Thou art the Son of God."<sup>7</sup> The confession of St. Peter, according to the first evangelist, is an avowal of the divine Sonship: "Thou

<sup>1</sup> Luke i. 32, 35.

<sup>2</sup> Mark i. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Mark ix. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Luke iv. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Luke iv. 41.

<sup>6</sup> vi. 51.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew xiv. 33. This exclamation, we see, is wanting in Mark. Jesus walking on the water frightened, even terrified, the disciples. The impression it produces is that inspired by a magician who is master of the elements, whose power is to be dreaded. Many critics think that the confession noted by Matthew, "Indeed Thou art the Son of God," is out of its place.

art the Christ, the Son of the living God."<sup>1</sup> When the Saviour appears before the Sanhedrin, the high priest asks Him: "Art thou the Christ, the Son of God?" He answers: "You have said it; I am."<sup>2</sup> The crowd and the chiefs of the nation at the foot of the cross insult Him in these terms: "If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross."<sup>3</sup> These convergent testimonies shed about Jesus a splendour of incomparable glory. They came from all parts of the cosmos in the midst of which Jesus was seen and contemplated: voices from heaven, angels and demons, apostles, all acclaimed Him as the Son of God. The title was accorded to Him together with that of Messiah. What is the value we are to attribute to this title?

In order to understand it and determine its connection with that of Messiah, it is necessary to recall the different meanings of the expression Son of God in the Old Testament, and to fix its precise and complete sense, since those who heard Jesus, and those who addressed Him by this name, had in their minds the title as it occurs in the holy books and the commentaries of the doctors, and interpreted it by the light of acquired beliefs and preconceived ideas.

We neglect two applications of the title to angels, found in Genesis and Job,<sup>4</sup> and to judges.<sup>5</sup> These

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xvi. 16.      <sup>2</sup> Mark xiv. 61, 62; Matthew xxvi. 63, 64.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew xxvii. 40.      <sup>4</sup> Genesis vi. 1-4; Job i. 6; ii. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Psalm lxxxi. (lxxxii.) 6, 7.

two instances are isolated, and had no influence upon the current ideas of the Jews. It is, on the contrary, very frequently employed to qualify the relations of the Jewish people with God: "You are the sons of Yahweh, your God";<sup>1</sup> "Israel is My son, My firstborn."<sup>2</sup>

But the king is especially the Son of God. "David shall build a house to My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to Me a son. . . ."<sup>3</sup> The exaltation of the theocratic king appears specially in the Psalms, where the character of the Son of God comes into striking relief, seeming to reach apotheosis:—

"The kings of the earth stood up,  
And the princes gathered themselves together  
Against Yahweh and against His anointed.  
I have established My king upon Sion My holy mount.  
I will publish a decree:  
Yahweh said to me: thou art My son,  
To-day have I begotten thee."<sup>4</sup>

The same attributes occur in a later psalm:—<sup>5</sup>

"He (the King) shall call upon Me: My father art  
Thou,  
My God and the rock of my salvation.  
And I will make him the firstborn:  
Highest of the kings of the earth."

<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy xiv. 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Exodus iv. 22.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Samuel vii. 13, 14.

<sup>4</sup> Psalm ii. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Psalm lxxxviii. (lxxxix.) 27, 28.

It appears from these texts that the paternity of God only implies a specially watchful and benevolent providence for the divine people and for their king. Israel is the Son of God, because it owes to Yahweh its national and political origin, and its religious constitution. The title is, and can only be, a metaphor. By metaphor, also, the chief of the nation is called the son of Yahweh. By the holy anointing he was engendered the Son of God, and consecrated to God; his coronation is a birth. Yahweh takes him into His special keeping; He transfers to him His rights over all the earth, and promises him descendants who shall never become extinct.

If the people of Israel and the theocratic king are sons of God, all the more will the title be applicable to the future king, specially chosen and expected to found the sovereignty of God on earth, to destroy the empires hostile to God, and to redeem His people. He is the anointed, the Christ, the Son of God, *par excellence*. But so far the formula implies sonship of no other essence than that attributed to the other sons of God. The most exalted psalm in point of Messianic inspiration, which raises the theocratic king to the highest degree, and seems to place him in a divine sphere, leaves him nevertheless with all his human associations. He is a king, a son of David, like his father; consequently, a man born of a man, who is chosen by God, consecrated by God, and dowered with His Spirit to do His work.



The Messianic fervour of Psalm ii. reappears in the Psalter of Solomon. The Pharisee who wrote those poems after the conquest of Pompey alone takes it up and revives it; he alone perpetuates the ancient honorific titles. The word Christ, Christ of God, is now seen anew for the first time; the writer foretells the appearance of a son of David, whom God will raise up according to His promise, whom He will invest with His sovereign power.

This idea of the Christ of God was conceived thirty or forty years before the birth of Jesus. God, the King of Israel, who had sworn that the throne should not depart from the family of David, is implored to raise up a king of that house, who shall reign over Israel, who shall break the power of its enemies, and purge Jerusalem of the pagans. He will be a just king, free from all sin, and taught of God. There will be no more wickedness in those days, for all men will be holy, and the king will be the Christ of the Lord. He will not put his trust in horses and their riders, but he will smite the earth with one word of his mouth. God will strengthen him with His Holy Spirit. True, the title Son of God does not occur, but the description of the Messianic attributes determines and restricts the divine attributes. Still, this Messiah is entirely human; at the time of his manifestation he will be anointed by God, Who will give him his Holy Spirit and invest him with supernatural power that he may triumph over his enemies.

That is the measure and nature of the divinity which is looked for in this Messiah, the Son of God. Never did the Jews (we are speaking of the contemporaries of Jesus) expect a Messiah who would not be born of man,<sup>1</sup> who would have any but a purely human origin. Never did they imagine that the divine Sonship called for effective communication of the divinity to the chosen man. God is the Father, because He is the Creator and the special Providence, because He will clothe His Messiah king on the day of his investiture with supernatural attributes; and although his attributes are continually extended and embellished, the Son of God remains clearly on this side of the line, and very far from the divinity; he does not pass into heaven, where Yahweh for ever remains alone and transcendent.

Although the name Son of God was not a Messianic title in common usage, the avowal of the demons and the questions of the Sanhedrin show that it was known. The Christ and the Son of God appear as synonymous titles of equivalent value. Which of the two is the measure of the other? If the Saviour is the Son of God because He is the Messiah, the title Son of God will be limited and

<sup>1</sup> The angel announces to Mary that she will be mother of a Son who shall be called the Son of the Most High, to whom Yahweh will give the throne of David His father, that He may reign for ever in the house of Jacob; the Messiah could not be better described. "Quomodo fiet istud quoniam virum non cognosco?" was the virgin's reply (Luke i. 32, 34). Cf. Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone*, chapter xlix: πάντες ἡμεῖς τὸν Χριστὸν ἀνθρώπον ἐξ ἀνθρώπων προσδοκῶμεν γενήσεσθαι.

restricted by that of Messiah, and will imply no more than this latter. Ought we to reverse the relationship and say that the Saviour is the Messiah because He is the Son of God?

We think that the different testimonies by which Jesus is proclaimed the Christ were inspired by the Old Testament, and that as such they retain to some extent the sense of their origin. But since the Saviour threw a veil over His character as the Messiah, hiding His personality under unobtrusive titles, those different avowals cannot have proceeded from a direct comprehension of His nature as possibly or probably divine. For all the witnesses the two titles are equivalent, and are to be resolved into the same principle. That is why we wished to analyse the Messianic concept and retrace it to its origin, as the only means of discovering the essential constituent elements. The value of the title Son of God was revealed and determined by the value of the title Messiah.<sup>1</sup>

Now we may take up the gospel testimonies again, and review them in the light of the Jewish conceptions, reflected more or less directly, more or less unconsciously, in all those who suspected or believed Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah, the Son of God.

In the story of the Infancy, which figures at the

<sup>1</sup> We have not extracted the whole of the Messianic hope which the Old Testament contains; we have restricted ourselves to a description of the ordinary state of mind of the Jews, without pretending that their conceptions were adequate to the teaching of the Scriptures.

beginning of St. Luke's Gospel, the angel tells Mary that the child will be born of the Holy Ghost, "and therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God," or, according to the translation to which we have already alluded, "that which shall be born of thee shall be called Holy, the Son of God." The Saviour, according to the Judæo-Christian tradition to which the gospel testifies, was the Son of God because He had been conceived by the Holy Ghost. The union of the divine nature with the human is not required by this text.

The voice from heaven is twice heard, at the Baptism and at the Transfiguration, speaking each time in terms practically identical. At the Baptism the Holy Spirit descends upon the Saviour and declares Him to be the Son of God; the heavens open, and He hears a voice saying to Him: "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." To determine the sense of the formula "Son of God," we must find out what this beloved Son is. The man,<sup>1</sup> we think, is the central figure; it is upon the man that the Holy Spirit descends with His gifts and the divine consecration. The voice makes known to the world that the humble Nazarene is the instrument chosen to found the kingdom of God. What the voice reveals, both at the Baptism and at the Transfiguration—supposing the descent of the Holy

<sup>1</sup> Acts of the Apostles, x. 38. Ἰησοῦν τὸν ἀπὸ Ναζαρέθ, ὡς ἔχρισεν αὐτὸν ὁ Θεὸς πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ δυνάμει.

Ghost and the voice from heaven to have been sensible occurrences—is not the Word of God everlastingly born of the Father, is not an episode in the existence of the Trinity, but it is the Messianic character of *this man*, specially elected and beloved of God. The formulæ “thou art My beloved Son,” “this is My beloved Son,” do not go beyond the conception of the Old Testament. The Son of God is not the only-begotten of the Father in the Johannine sense; He is the sprout from the root of Jesse, upon whom rests the Spirit of Yahweh, the spirit of wisdom and of understanding.<sup>1</sup> Jesus Himself applied to Himself the prophecy of Isaías:<sup>2</sup> “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because the Lord hath anointed Me; He hath sent Me to preach to the meek, to heal the contrite of heart, and to preach release to the captives, and deliverance to them that are shut up, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” No better context could be furnished to the voice from heaven than the declaration of Yahweh showing to the prophet His servant whom He has chosen:<sup>3</sup> “Behold my servant, I will uphold him; my elect, my soul delighteth in him; I have given my spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.”

<sup>1</sup> Isaías xi. 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> lxi. 1, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Isaías xlii. 1. Matthew has reproduced this text (xii. 18). *Ἰδοὺ ὁ παῖς μου, ὃν ἡρέτισα, ὁ ἀγαπητός μου, ὃν ευδόκησεν ἡ ψυχὴ μου. δῆσω τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐπ’ αὐτόν.* We find not only the sense of the voice which spoke from heaven at the Baptism and the Transfiguration, but the very words it employed. Observe that “abdi” translated by *ὁ παῖς μου* was understood as *ὁ υἱός μου*.

The Spirit, by whom Jesus was consecrated as the Messiah and the Son of God, leads Him into the desert. Satan wishes to ascertain if He be the Christ, to turn Him aside from the Messianic work as He has conceived it, as the wisdom of the heavenly Father has ordained it. The Son of God, as He appears in the accounts of the Temptation, is evidently the wonder-working Messiah expected by the Jews, who must establish His identity by the performance of miracles.

That Messiah and Son of God are equivalent titles is beyond question. As is the Messiah, so is also the Son of God.

St. Luke himself takes care to mark this identity. From the beginning of the apostolate of Galilee the Saviour multiplies exorcisms; and the devils He expels proclaim Him to be the Son of God. "And devils went out from many, crying out and saying: 'Thou art the Son of God. And rebuking them, He suffered them not to speak; for they knew that He was Christ.'" The title has no other significance in the exclamation of the possessed man of Gerasa: "What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Son of God? Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time?" He is the founder of the kingdom, the all-powerful exorcist, who unremittingly pursues the enemy of the kingdom of God.

We reserved for special examination the confession of St. Peter and the interrogation of the Saviour by the Sanhedrin. Here also, according to certain



critics, the title Son of God did not exceed that of Messiah. It accompanied the other as an epithet of honour, neither modifying nor heightening its significance.

To us it seems, however, that these two avowals of the divine Sonship are not to be placed on the same footing as the earlier testimonies, for they are neither of them judgments of man. At Cæsarea it is the Father of heaven who inspires Peter to confess Jesus Christ the Son of the living God. Before the Sanhedrin it is Jesus Himself who, being adjured by the religious authority of Israel, solemnly declares Himself to be Christ the Son of God.

St. Matthew alone, we remember, has preserved St. Peter's confession in its entirety: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God"; while neither St. Mark nor St. Luke has reproduced more than the simple avowal: "Thou art the Christ, Thou art the Christ of God." It is beyond dispute that in the mind of the author of the first gospel (who at the end of it has the well-known words of invocation of the Blessed Trinity) the words: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God," were a recognition of the divine Sonship as we understand it. We must admit also that St. Mark and St. Luke believed in the divinity of Jesus Christ, that they regarded His Messiahship as tributary to the divine Sonship, that for them He was the Christ because the Son of God, and not the Son of God because He was the Messiah. They wrote at a time when this faith was definitely

established, and they expressed themselves in clear language. In their eyes the title of Messiah was synonymous with that of Son of God thus understood. Had St. Peter the same intuition? It is allowable so to conjecture, and we think we shall be able to establish that he had.

The tradition found in the three evangelists circulated in the churches. Apparently it recounted that one day the apostles—alone among all who were witnesses of the life of Jesus—had recognised Him as the Messiah; or better perhaps, that on that day Peter had divined who He was and told Him to His face. To confess Him as the Messiah in the Jewish sense was not to know Jesus. To see in Him only the son of David endowed with divine attributes, having for His mission to establish a kingdom, though this had been spiritually understood, was still not to know Him. Jesus must have been the Unknown, even to those for whose sake He revealed the mysteries, to whom He gave the order to continue His work. But the tradition ran that Peter, in words of striking emphasis, had confessed Him to be the Christ, the Son of the living God. In the first gospel this confession is traced to a revelation from the Father; Peter was not led to his avowal by reflection, nor by any co-ordination of sentiments or experiences. It is a revelation, and as such it cannot be criticised, since it is not the outcome of a psychological preparation. What we think is that the apostle proclaimed the Messiahship of Jesus as the function

of His divine Sonship. St. Matthew has understood the confession in this way. He makes no attempt to dissociate his own judgment from that of St. Peter. If St. Mark and St. Luke have not reproduced the confession in its entirety, it is apparently because the avowal of Messianism implied, in their eyes, the avowal of divine Sonship. If the order to keep silence be reduced to a prohibition against telling anyone whomsoever that Jesus was the Christ, it must have been because that title alone was dangerous, because it might disturb the minds of the people and provoke a scandal.

Jesus' reply to the high priest, when asked by him if He were the Son of the Blessed God, also contains a declaration of divine Sonship, which leaves all anterior declarations far behind. Here Jesus is adjured, in the name of the living God, by a tribunal which of right should know who He is, whence He is, what character He claims. It is not possible for Him to evade the question; and, in fact, He answers it plainly. He confesses that He is the mysterious Being whose natural place is beside God from all eternity, who will appear at the end of time to judge humanity. In the presence of doctors and priests who were acquainted with the book of Daniel, probably also with the books of Enoch, He could not have expressed Himself more clearly; He gives them to understand that He does not belong to humanity; that He came from heaven, where He pre-existed before earth or heaven was created,

that He has the right to sit upon the throne of God.

But we think we must maintain that none of the other declarations of divine Sonship exceed the conceptions of the Old Testament. They were not founded upon the direct intuition of a divine nature joined to a human nature, nor even on knowledge of the supernatural conception. Jesus is the theocratic king whose mission is to establish the sovereignty of God. As such, He is par excellence the Messiah, the anointed of God; as such, and in the same degree, He is the Son of God. The voice from heaven declared to men the Messiah king, the Son of God; Him the demons identified from the outset of His preaching.<sup>1</sup> Messiah and Son of God are synonymous titles in the texts we have collected; they are resolvable into the same elements; but the title Son of God is restricted and defined by that of Messiah. Such is the evident conclusion of this our first inquiry.

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, after his commentary on the confession of St. Peter (Matthew xvi. 16), observes: "Sed quid est? Numquid alii non confessi sunt Filium Dei. Immo legitur de Nathanaele, Joan. i. Item illi qui in navi, supra 14. Quare ergo hic beatificatus Petrus et non alii? Quia alii filium adoptivum confessi sunt, hic autem filium naturalem: ideo hic prae ceteris beatificatur, qui primus confessus est divinitatem. Origenes dicit: Videtur quod ante non confessus fuerit. Sed quomodo misit eos praedicare? Respondet quod a principio non praedicabant ipsum esse Christum; sed paenitentiam praedicabant. Item potest esse quod praedicabat Christum; sed hic primo ipsum esse Filium Dei; ergo hic specialiter remunerat."

## II

We laid aside the declarations of Jesus Himself regarding His divine Sonship for separate examination. The testimonies which reached Him from without all took their origin in the beliefs prevailing at the time that the Christ should be the Son of God. The measure of divinity accorded to Him, the qualification of Son allowed to Him, were necessarily determined and regulated by the popular conceptions founded on the commentaries on the Messianic prophecies elaborated by the Pharisees and the scribes. Jesus was the Son of God because He was the Messiah, and in so far as a man could participate in the divinity.

What we ask of the conscious knowledge of the Saviour, as it was reflected in the primitive tradition, is a distinct avowal of what He was; that He should tell us what was the nature of the divine Sonship, and what rights it conferred upon Him. The modern critics think that Jesus spoke of Himself in the sense of His contemporaries; they accept that sense as accurate, but they invariably eliminate from it the supernatural attributes. "The coming of Jesus Christ," said Strauss,<sup>1</sup> "is no longer the implantation of a divine and new principle; it is an offspring from the most secret pith of humanity, divinely endowed."

In view of the words of Jesus Christ Himself, we

<sup>1</sup> See Renan, *Études d'Histoire religieuse*, 1857, p. 183.

think, on the contrary, that it is necessary to transpose the terms of the conclusion arrived at by His contemporaries thus: Jesus is the Messiah, because He is the Son of God. The title Messiah is only an aspect of His divine nature. The Messianic function is only one province of His work; beyond that function, and independent of it, there is found a divine Sonship which gives it sovereign efficacy, the splendour of an incomparable theophany. The Jews were waiting for the deliverer, the Son of David, whom God would exalt and invest with all power, giving Him His Holy Spirit; in our idea, God sends to humanity as a Saviour His own Son, divine in His nature, consequently born of Himself. Here we have the Christian conception of the incarnation as fixed by St. John, which St. Paul, from the outset of his preaching, explained in formulæ of striking clearness.

When He spoke of His divine Sonship, Jesus never said expressly: I am the Son of God; but He let it be clearly understood that there was but one Son of God, and that that one was Himself. By a deduction, which for us has the force of a direct avowal, this title proceeds immediately from the formulæ which He habitually employed.

Undoubtedly He revealed to His disciples that God would manifest Himself to them as their Father; He suggested to them filial sentiments towards God, and prepared for them a special and characteristic prayer, the Our Father. But it is not



upon the same step to the temple that He and they pray to their Father ; He stands apart upon a height to which men have no access. His constant care to preserve the distinction between natural, innate sonship and the acquired sonship of the disciples points to a determination not to lose sight of the antithesis between the titles "my Father" and "your Father." He is so far removed from men, that the angels of heaven interpose between Him and them ; He is unapproachable, because of His natural place, immediately by the side of the Father ; men, the angels, the Son, the Father, is the gradation which He reveals to the world in a text admittedly authentic :<sup>1</sup> "of that day or hour no man knoweth, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father."

What does this divine Sonship suppose, what does it really contain ? Do the divine attributes which the title gives Him differ only in degree from those of the disciples, who also have God for Father ? We must analyse the texts, not very numerous, which the synoptic evangelists have collected, in order to specify the concept.

The parable of the Lord of the vineyard<sup>2</sup> and the husbandmen shows us certain of the qualities of the Son. At the time of the vintage the master sends all his servants successively to claim the produce of the vineyard. They are beaten, or killed, or stoned. He has yet a son, an only son, well-beloved ; he

<sup>1</sup> Mark xiii. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Mark xii. 1-12.

sends him to the husbandmen, saying: "They will reverence my son. But the husbandmen said one to another: This is the heir, come let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours." In the parable, the son is the only son of the Lord of the vineyard; his birth raises him above all the servants. Jesus is the only Son of the Father. The prophets sent successively to Israel to enforce the rights of God were the servants of the Father; they are the Son's servants also. The rights assigned by the parable to the well-beloved son are the complete and exclusive inheritance of the paternal property, which inheritance he owes to his birth. Jesus, because He is the Son, has the same rights as God, sharing with Him the universal sovereignty: it is His to reign over the world, not as a political, military king, but as God. His coming into the world is, moreover, a condescension on the part of the Father and a humiliation for Himself. To collect rent is the duty of a servant. When all these have failed, the father resolves to send his son, hoping that, at any rate, he will be respected. The exaltation of Jesus Christ above all the prophets and great servants of the Old Testament, His unique rights as a Son, as wide, as full as those of God Himself, His voluntary abasement to the level of a servant, are three marks of the divine Sonship of the Saviour; these stand out from the parable, without there being any necessity to torture or worry the text. Light now pours into the mysterious depths of the nature of Jesus; He who,

under the title of Son of man, laboured quietly, silently, slowly, at the work of the kingdom of Heaven, now dares to claim honours such as are due to a Son born of God, and equal rights with God. That is a pretension without example, without precedent ; nor has it ever been reiterated. It demands the serious consideration of the historian and the critic.

The conclusions we have indicated concerning the nature of the divine Sonship, the elements which constitute it, and the power it confers upon the titular, are elsewhere supported in the gospels. We will only mention the parable<sup>1</sup> of the feast given by the Father on the occasion of his Son's wedding ; the Saviour's claim to exemption from payment of the tax, because He is a Son ;<sup>2</sup> and pass on at once to the solemn confession of Jesus as to His relationship with the Father. St. Matthew and St. Luke narrate it in identical terms ; but the latter appears to have preserved the time and date :<sup>3</sup>

“I give thanks to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth,  
Because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and  
prudent

And hast revealed them to little ones.

Yea, Father, (I thank Thee that) so it hath seemed good  
in Thy sight.

All things are delivered to Me by My Father ;

And no one knoweth the Son but the Father ;

Neither doth anyone know the Father, but the Son, and  
he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal Him.

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xxii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew xvii. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew xi. 25 ; Luke x. 21.

We know from the different contexts in which the two evangelists have placed the Saviour's utterance, that the things hidden from the proud and revealed to little ones are the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, and that the all-powerfulness delivered to the Son is the power of redemption ; but that which constitutes the chief interest of this text, from the point of view of our inquiry, is the compenetration of Father and Son.

No one knows the Father but the Son ; that is, no one but the Son can ever comprehend what He is, what He wills, what He decrees. Jesus knows the nature of God, His will especially, and His counsels which are deeper and more secret still ; He sees them. These are the "heavenly things"<sup>1</sup> of which St. John speaks: "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."<sup>2</sup>

As to the Son, He is Himself so mysterious, so unapproachable, His nature is so transcendent, that only the intelligence of the Father is adequate to know Him: "No one knoweth the Son but the Father." It has been pointed out<sup>3</sup> that the two clauses: the Son alone knows the Father, the Father alone knows the Son, are a detailed Oriental mode of expressing the reciprocity of mutual understanding, and that they must therefore be taken together and not be expounded separately.

<sup>1</sup> iii. 12 ;

<sup>2</sup> i. 18.

<sup>3</sup> by Dalman, *The Words of Jesus*, p. 283.

This declaration, which so far exceeds the ordinary tone of the synoptic gospels, has been compared to an aerolite fallen from the Johannine firmament. We are suddenly transported by it upon the heights occupied by the fourth evangelist; one breathes the same air; the same horizon stretches in the distance. The vision of John then, at least once, passed before the eyes of his predecessors, the synoptists.

Harnack has recently given an explanation of this text,<sup>1</sup> according to which Jesus is only the Son of God because He knows God as His Father. "The knowledge of God," he says, "is the sphere of the divine Sonship. In that knowledge of God, Jesus came to know as Father, as *His* Father, the holy Being who rules earth and heaven. His consciousness of being the Son of God is therefore nothing but the practical consequence of the knowledge of God as Father and his Father. Properly understood, the knowledge of God is the integral content of the name Son." According to Harnack's view the divine Sonship of Jesus is no more than the practical result of His knowledge of God, so that this latter would stand to the former as causal antecedent. When we ask him why God allowed this man to know Him directly, he replies that God, having specially chosen Him to do His work, gave Him all power and all knowledge; that such power and knowledge did not require a divine nature to support it, but that all that was required was a *beneplacitum divinum*.

<sup>1</sup> *What is Christianity?*, p. 128.

According to him : election ; divine *mode* of knowing ; and thence, Jesus's consciousness of being specially loved of God, are the three successive steps of the process of which the terminus is the divine Sonship.

For us the divine Sonship is antecedent, at least logically, to the knowledge of the mysteries, and is an unconditional attribute. This interpretation can be derived in a general way from the synotic gospels, and it seems to us to explain most faithfully the sense of the text we are analysing. Jesus does not say that He is the Son because all things are delivered to Him, because He knows God. It is more than arbitrary to attribute to Him a conception so extravagant. All things are delivered to Him because He has a divine mode of knowing the Father, because He is the Son. This seems to us the natural movement of the thoughts of Jesus.

Bernard Weiss,<sup>1</sup> like Harnack, reduces the divine Sonship to the knowledge of the Father. "Jesus," he says, "speaking of His call to the function of the highest Mediator-revealer, connects His commission and the power to execute it, not with His metaphysical being, but with His special and perfect knowledge of the Father, and also with the complete harmony of His will with the will of God."

This sonship amounts to intimacy with God, including neither identity nor community of nature.

Undoubtedly Jesus does not place His nature,

<sup>1</sup> *Lehrbuch der bibl. Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, p. 58.



His metaphysical being, in a prominent position. But no one supposes that we touch essences and natures directly. We only come in contact with them through the medium of attributes. If for an intelligent nature to be is to know, then to *know* like God, to have the power of God, is to be God. Was not Jesus by the fact of His divine knowledge above the angels?

Jesus as the Son of God, we say, has a right to the heritage of the Father. He is not the Son of God because He is specially loved of God, because God revealed Himself to Him, and in a way shared for His advantage the mysteries of His divine Being and His counsels. Again we must reverse the order. Jesus, because He is the only Son, has all the love of the Father, and full knowledge of what He is and what He wills. The divine Sonship is at the foundation of all His divine attributes ; it is the logical and causal antecedent whence the mission of Christ, His all-powerfulness as the founder of the kingdom, His intimacy with the Father, are derived ; all things are given to Him because He is the Son. His whole life is nothing but the expansion and revelation of the pre-existent sonship. The divinity which the Saviour claims for Himself not only surpasses in quantity and degree that which the Old Testament attributes to the people of Israel and the theocratic king ; but it is of another quality, another essence.

Is Jesus the Son of God because a divine nature was united to His human nature ? In order to answer this

question, we must inquire whence He derived His sonship, by what road the divine came into communication with the human. We may affirm that, according to the synoptic gospels themselves, the Saviour knew no beginning to that sonship. The Baptism consecrated the man as the Messiah; it manifested Him to the world as the instrument chosen to found the kingdom of God; but, as we concluded from our former inquiry, His conscious knowledge of being the Messiah does not explain His conscious knowledge of being the Son of God. Moreover, the divine Sonship which He claims goes far beyond even the most exalted Messianic attributes. To be the Christ is only a function of His attribute of Son of God; His Baptism was not the means of connection by which He was specially attached to God. According to the Christian faith, Jesus Christ is the Son of God because He is born of God. Can we demonstrate this?

True, we do not find in the synoptic gospels formulæ so abundant, so explicit, and so elaborate as in St. Paul's epistles and in the writings of St. John. The three evangelists, following one same catechesis, took no special pains to demonstrate that Jesus was the Son of God, because when they wrote all the churches believed that Jesus was God. Although particular considerations led them to write, and guided them in carrying out their intention, they wished, nevertheless, to narrate the gospel as St. Paul conceived it, as he preached it: how Jesus

of Nazareth (who was the Son of God) lived and died to save men, and how He will come again to complete the work of redemption. The public life of the Saviour, His death, His resurrection, and the Parousia, are the essential elements of the evangelical cycles. We can understand why the three synoptists wished, above all, to preserve the remembrance of the living physiognomy of Jesus, why they gave prominence to the human Personality, and recounted His history exactly as it passed in Galilee; we can understand how interesting were the miracles to readers who were greedy for the marvellous, and how the plain and easy sense of the parables was impressed without difficulty in the simple imagination of the first Christians.

We find, however, in the early preaching a passing allusion by the Saviour to the Davidical descent of the Messiah.<sup>1</sup> Was there not intention in that allusion? Does it not contain a suggestion of the divine birth in the sense of St. John and St. Paul? "Jesus answering said, teaching in the temple: How do the scribes say, that Christ is the son of David? For David himself saith by the Holy Ghost: The Lord said to my Lord: Sit on my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool. David, therefore, himself calleth Him Lord, and whence is he then His son?" No one was able to answer Him a word, adds St. Matthew, "neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions."<sup>2</sup> Quite

<sup>1</sup> Mark xii. 35, 37.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew xxii. 46.

different interpretations have been given to this text. Certain critics, Strauss among them, think that Jesus intended to combat the Davidical birth of the Messiah, but this interpretation is invalidated by the apparently primitive text of St. Mark: How is He then the son of David? Jesus does not deny the royal lineage of the Messiah. According to others, the Saviour wished to make it clear that "Son of David" was not a fitting title for the Elect of God, that His quality of Messiah did not depend upon the Davidical descent, and that the Messiahship was not to be established by genealogy. This interpretation suffers from a serious misconception of the subject in dispute and the nature of the difficulty. There was no question of precedence and dignity. That the Messiah should surpass even His great ancestor did not surprise the Scribes. They well knew that the special election of Yahweh was in no way dependent upon the Davidical descent, since other sons of David had not been specially favoured by God; but that the Messianic character, proceeding from a special unction, the plenitude of the Holy Spirit and supernatural attributes, was bestowed by God and by God alone. If the Pharisees and Scribes had understood the difficulty proposed to them by Jesus in this way, they would not have been perplexed. Jesus casts no doubt upon the Davidical descent of the Messiah; nor is the question He raises one of dignity and honour, but a question of birth. The contradiction is in this, that David cannot be the father, the only

father, of a Being so exalted as to be seated at the right hand of God.<sup>1</sup> This Being is associated in the sovereignty and omnipotence of Yahweh, He lives in the divine sphere, He participates in the divinity. The descent from David knows nothing of the supraterritorial origin, which nevertheless is indispensable. The Messiah is the son of David because He is man; but He is also Son of God, born of God, because He is God. The force of the text has constrained even Holtzmann<sup>2</sup> to admit that the gospel of St. Matthew was influenced by the inspiration of St. Paul. At the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans,<sup>3</sup> namely, he distinguishes the personality of the Saviour; he speaks clearly of the two births of Jesus Christ who, according to the flesh, is the Son of David, according to the Spirit, the Son of God. Is not this an exact commentary on the Saviour's words? Does it not solve the riddle which silenced the Pharisees?

Jesus is the Son of God; He is the only begotten of God. He Himself it is who has raised Himself above humanity. He declares Himself to be greater than the angels of heaven. He partakes the solitude of God, that solitude which the Jewish theology regarded as impenetrable, inviolable, over which it kept strict, jealous watch. The rights of the Son exceed all measure; even a man afflicted with *la*

<sup>1</sup> The complete sense of the Saviour's question is this: How can David be the father of Him who sits at the right hand of God? And yet he is His father.

<sup>2</sup> *Handcommentar*, p. 248.

<sup>3</sup> i. 3, 4.

*folie des grandeurs* never entertains ambitions so wide and so exalted. Jesus claimed to inherit all the riches of the Father, to share His omnipotence in the government of the universe, not as a Cæsar or theocratic emperor, but as God ; he regarded the prophets as the servants of His Father, as His own servants. In His eyes, those rights were not acquired by adoption ; they are not the reward of His piety towards God, of the zeal with which He has contributed to the foundation of the kingdom of Heaven ; but they are the natural rights of the Son. Between the Father and Son, also, there is perfect and adequate compenetration, for ever proceeding from the two Persons conjoined in intimacy which precludes distance, which time cannot measure.

Jesus assigns no temporal beginning to His divine Sonship, for He knows none. That Sonship is not His through the supernatural conception, which only expresses the sanctity of His birth ; whatever sense may be given to the words of the angel, the result of the operation of the Holy Ghost was that the Progeny should be holy. The primitive christologies, whether St. Paul's or St. John's, do not take the miraculous conception as their starting-point. To the eyes of the first Christians the miraculous conception excluded human generation, but it involved no such idea as that the divine should have enveloped the personality of Jesus.

The divine Sonship, as deduced from the synoptic gospels, presupposes a divine nature, and therefore



requires a divine birth. Jesus is the Son of God because He is born of God. Here, then, with the aid of texts of which the authenticity is no longer disputed, we join hands with the teaching of St. Paul and St. John.

Let us beware of introducing into history terms borrowed from the language of geology and mineralogy, such as stratification, crystallisation. The danger of bringing these into requisition, in order to express the different phases of Christian doctrine, has been that they have given the illusion of solidity and embarrassed the deliberate examination of the facts. The oldest witness to the faith of the Church is St. Paul ; his letters are the first writings of the New Testament ; the synoptic gospels, produced at different dates during the first century, are posterior to them. St. Mark was the disciple of St. Peter, St. Luke was the companion of St. Paul, and there exists no motive to break with the ancient tradition regarding the relations between the two evangelists and the two apostles. When St. Mark and St. Luke wrote they were acquainted with the living, substantial christology of St. Paul. St. Mark, writing his gospel at Rome, could not entirely set aside the Epistle to the Romans. Now the two evangelists had not the slightest reluctance to give most sober accounts of the life of Jesus ; they did not, therefore, discern any divergence between what is called the primitive christology and the christology of St. Paul. More-

over, at that time, as we have shown already, all the churches believed in the divinity of Jesus Christ.

Let us not, therefore, oppose the doctrine of St. Paul to that of the first Christians. The unshakable teaching of the apostle concerning the Lord, who was pre-existent with God before the creation of the world, in which He co-operated;<sup>1</sup> who was the Son of God, because He was born of God,<sup>2</sup> who being rich became poor,<sup>3</sup> and thought it no robbery<sup>4</sup> to make Himself equal to God, sheds, on the contrary, abundant light upon the synoptic gospels. The portraits which they have drawn of the humble Preacher of Galilee, so far from disagreeing with that which St. Paul has traced,<sup>5</sup> are enhanced by it. Is it really stepping outside history to attribute to the first evangelists the vision of John and to conclude that for them also the Prophet of Nazareth was "the Word made flesh, full of grace and truth"; that, at least spiritually, they "saw His glory, the glory, as it were, of the Only Begotten of the Father"?

<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians viii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Romans i. 4.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Corinthians viii. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Philippians ii. 6.

<sup>5</sup> The doctrine of the divine Sonship of Jesus Christ is not peculiar to St. Paul. It is not his christology which has been the occasion of the criticisms passed upon him at different times. Observe also that when writing to the Romans, that is, to Christians who did not receive their doctrine from him, St. Paul speaks of the divinity of Jesus Christ as a belief already established, already acquired, and undisputed. This is one of the most significant facts of primitive history. *There is nothing more wonderful in the history of human thought*, writes Sanday (*Epistle to the Romans*, p. 16), *than the silent and imperceptible way in which this doctrine, to us so difficult, took its place without struggle and without controversy among accepted Christian truths.*

## VII

### THE REDEMPTION

WE come now to the subject of the Messianic Redemption. Two questions immediately present themselves: Did Jesus regard humanity as being in need of salvation? Was it by His death that He undertook to save humanity?

We are fully aware of the difficulties which beset this subject, owing to the multiple elements into which it resolves itself; we know how bewildering is the study of this part of the work of Jesus Christ; yet it is of vital, not to say tragic, interest to the Christian conscience. Many problems, both of the metaphysical, and of the moral order, are inseparable from this page of history, and it would seem impossible to decipher it fully without the special solution of those problems. Again, we not infrequently come across intelligences in which the religious sense has never been awakened; persons who, though satisfied as to the moral value of the work of Jesus Christ, and the triumph of justice which it represents, yet remain strangers to the idea of sin, and feel no need of pardon.

Not only the stoic, who has formed an austere

ideal of right and duty, but the modern Protestant theologian himself sometimes hesitates to receive the ancient juridical conception of the Messianic salvation and the redemption. He retains the traditional terminology of sin, of the wrath of God poured out upon the guilty, of propitiatory sacrifice, but by means of deft exegesis he has succeeded in emptying the formulæ of their import, he has elaborated a new theology, and he imagines that persons of high culture, even the most fastidious, can accept it without the sacrifice of one of the exigencies of their thought. The sinner contracts no debt as regards God; to regard the death of Jesus as the solution of such a debt would be a barren and a puerile speculation. Is it possible that God would withhold His pardon from men but for the price of the blood of Jesus, and that He has insisted on the discharge of arrears of sin by this means? How is it conceivable that the sacrifice of the God-man could be required by God the Father on account of the hypothetical rights of His honour and holiness?

These theologians have therefore discarded the notion of any intention on the part of Jesus Himself to give to His death the value of a redemption. Salvation by blood, they say, is a dogmatic construction which can have had no foundation in the primitive gospel, that is, in the subjacent material of our synoptic gospels. Paul it is who invented and first elaborated that dogma. The dolorous and infamous death of Christ was one of the first problems

which claimed his attention, which he was bound to explain to himself in order to enlighten and satisfy his conscience. He solved it by likening the torment of Calvary to the sacrifices of the temple. The ardent, somewhat feverish, imagination of the Pharisee, who formerly had adored God through the medium of immolated victims, taking his part in the bloody rites, did not recoil before comparisons so lugubrious. Jesus on the cross appeared to him as the victim of the new covenant, offering Himself voluntarily in place of the holocausts of the old. Blood then was bound to enter essentially into the plan of redemption which the apostle constructed on behalf of God; and the hymn of the redeeming blood was sung with joy by the first Christians, who had been witnesses of the mysterious rites of the taurobolium and the alluring initiations of the cult of Mithra. We ourselves, having taken up the strophes from our childhood, are impressed with the idea, which neither time nor reaction of the intelligence are able to destroy or displace. And we surprise ourselves murmuring the canticle of long ago, in honour of "the glorious resplendent tree, crimson with the blood of the divine Redeemer."<sup>1</sup>

The method and scope of our work is indicated, and even imposed upon us, by these objections. We have to establish from the synoptic gospels alone that Jesus went to death for the salvation of men.

<sup>1</sup> "Arbor decora et fulgida  
Ornata regis purpura."

Those who visit Jerusalem are disconcerted by the medley and confusion of styles in the sanctuaries which have been erected for the preservation of the memory dear to our souls; sometimes they have been so clumsily constructed that it is no longer possible to recognise the configuration and orientation of the holy place, or find the sacred rock which alone is precious to us. The thesis of the Messianic salvation has been likened to those Palestinian structures; we shall endeavour to restore the really primitive bases upon which the apostles and doctors built, and we hope to discover the sacred stone which they hem in.

## I

To understand the whole purpose of Jesus relative to His death, we must show how He prepared it. He did not improvise it, nor was it forced upon Him; it was a last act, crowning a logical series of convergent thoughts and coordinated acts. But before we show that Jesus gave His life as a ransom to save men, it is necessary to solve the preliminary question: Had men need of salvation?

Although the Saviour never, in a systematic manner, enunciated any theory of human nature, although his discourse has come down to us shattered into fragments by the tradition of the synoptics, nevertheless, we are still able to gather up important fragments of His thoughts on the subject. Moreover, we find Him disputing with adversaries who



resorted to exegetical subtleties. We need not, therefore, ask of His dialogue the ease and flow of Greek dialectic, the modern forms of reasoning and deduction. We shall attend to His profound conclusions, to the intuitions of His soul, to which the character of absolute and eternal verities cannot be refused.

Jesus never considered human nature from the psychological point of view ; He did not discuss the origin of the soul, nor the laws of its intellectual development. He looked at man in his divine destiny, seeing him, analysing him, in his relations to God, measuring the degree of his correspondence with the divine ideal, and the reflection of that ideal in his moral and religious life. It would be, however, most inexact to regard Jesus as an enemy of this life, to believe that He despised men as such, like one who had been infected with the pessimism of the Oriental dreamer. On the contrary, the impression we gather from the mere reading of our gospels is that for Jesus, though His preoccupations were of a very different order, the eminent dignity of human nature was not an empty phrase. Man is great ; an intelligent, solicitous providence continually watches over his natural life, and Jesus declares that providence responsible in some way for the events which surprise and disconcert us, especially our death. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered, fear not, therefore : better are you than many sparrows."<sup>1</sup> The Sabbath was made for man : its

<sup>1</sup> Matthew x. 30, 31.

obligation is extinguished when it damages man's interests. A man is worth more than a sheep.<sup>1</sup>

But this life, despite its value in itself, is not in itself its end; it is not independent, autonomous. The thoughts of Jesus did not stop to dwell upon the point of view we have just expressed; as we have said, He looked at man almost exclusively in his relation to God, and in that relation He esteems not so much the few years of temporal life as the eternity upon which death opens the door; His mission is to reveal the strict union and essential interdependence of the two lives; how the former is magnified and dignified by the latter, how consequently we should greatly prize it as the very short trial which will determine the conditions of our immortality. Such is the great certitude of Jesus. He expressed it in sayings to which He gave a hard, we might say implacable, form. And of all the words by which men have really lived, which have imposed themselves on their consciences as indisputable principles of moral life, none have so deeply moved and disturbed them. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"<sup>2</sup> He multiplies His exhortations to withdraw His disciples from their attachment to the goods of earth, to show them that the soul is more precious than the accumulated riches of all the universe, that it is better to lose oneself and destroy, by the constant exercise of

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Mark viii. 36, 37.

mortification, the sources of sin, than to wrong the spiritual life. "And I say to you my friends, be not afraid of them who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you shall fear : Fear ye Him who, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell ; yea, I say to you, fear Him."<sup>1</sup> Even the soul of the infant is the object of deep respect, for the most insignificant of human lives is precious in the sight of God. "See that you despise not one of these little ones ; for I say to you, that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven . . . It is not the will of your Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."<sup>2</sup>

Whence came to Him this belief in the other life? Did He, having inherited the faith of Israel and the hopes of the prophets, enrich the ancient doctrine with new conceptions? One cannot say that Jesus, like the Pharisees, preached the recompense which the future holds for those who suffer privations in this life, because justice is not perfectly realised in this world, because the reward of our virtues here is not proportionate to the labour of practising them. The teaching of the Saviour is found to differ widely from this, when one has arranged His various utterances in their respective places, and restored them to their original positions. The disciple is not invited to suffer and bear his cross, and die only and chiefly for the sake of recompense. The ideal of good is

<sup>1</sup> Luke xii. 4, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew xviii. 10, 14.

autonomous, and its exigencies spring from a new consciousness. The disciples are "Sons of God," and this consciousness which the Saviour has awakened in them will be the all-powerful motive of their austere and sacrificed lives. As sons of God their acts must reflect the perfections of God. According to the ancient moralists the measure of good is man's nature. "Whatever one does or says," Marcus Aurelius wrote, "I must be good, as if the emerald should say, 'Whatever anyone does or say, I must be emerald and keep my colour.'"<sup>1</sup> In the teaching of Jesus the divine nature of the disciple who hears Him is the measure of good; it is also the principal motive of his virtue; the reward to come tends to disappear.

Another question occurs: Did the life to come present itself to the mind of the Saviour as essentially connected with the resurrection; has the soul, in order to enjoy its happiness, to wait for the great eschatological manifestation? or did He regard the soul as independent of the body, capable of entering into glory immediately after death? We think that the Saviour clearly distinguished the two constituent principles of the human being, although He did not enlarge upon this doctrine. The spiritual principle is independent, surviving the dissolution of the body, unassailable by death; once judged, once confirmed in good, it continues to act according to the laws of its nature, and it can enjoy the bliss it has merited.

<sup>1</sup> *Thoughts*, vii. 15.

The texts are not numerous, but they are significant, and capable of producing a firm conviction. We quoted above from St. Luke an exhortation of the Saviour to His disciples : " Be not afraid of them who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you shall fear : fear ye Him, who after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell." The form St. Matthew has given to this sentence<sup>1</sup> is deserving of close attention : " Fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul : but rather fear Him who can destroy both body and soul in hell." The dualism of human nature is in this fragment as clearly laid down as it is in Greek philosophy ; we make this comparison in imitation of J. Weiss, who would incline to the belief that St. Matthew had been influenced by the platonic doctrine.<sup>2</sup> As to choosing between the two formulæ, the hypothesis of this critic does not commend itself to us ; all the more because the autonomy of the soul and its after-life, independently of the resurrection, is easily deducible from other texts.

Immediately after death, then, it is that the other life begins, that the bosom of Abraham and the gates of hell are opened ; the soul alone, without the body, enters into the full enjoyment of glory. It

<sup>1</sup> x. 28.

<sup>2</sup> *Das Evangelium des Lucas*, 8th edition, p. 486. The form of this logion, he says, speaking of that of St. Luke, appears to me more primitive. St. Matthew makes an antithesis between  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$  and  $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ , which seems rather Greek than Palestinian.

is said of Lazarus<sup>1</sup> that he died and was carried by angels into the bosom of Abraham; he dies, and, although the parable says nothing about his grave, we must conclude that his soul alone enjoys the bliss of heaven. Jesus had no intention of saying that the beggar's body was at once united to his soul to allow him to enter immediately upon his new life. The soul is happy by itself, just as the rich man's soul is cruelly tortured in hell by itself, while his body reposes in a splendid tomb. Doubtless the figurative element is in this parable overwhelming, joys and sufferings especially are represented, as if they were essentially sensible; but we know that the most spiritual realities, those furthest removed from the conditions of matter, are designated and expressed by metaphors borrowed from nature, without prejudice to their verity and their essence. Now, one of the verities perceived here is that the soul is independent of the body, and can enjoy perfect bliss, or suffer cruelly, without it.

Jesus, replying to the ironical questions of the Sadducees<sup>2</sup> regarding the other world and the nature of its joys, showed them first of all that their knowledge of the Scriptures was incomplete; as to the negation which constitutes the Sadducean heresy, He adds: "That the dead rise again, Moses also showed at the bush, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; for He is not the God of the dead,

<sup>1</sup> Luke xvi. 19-31.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xx. 27-41.



but the God of the living." The intention of Jesus is to prove that those patriarchs will rise again; and He appeals with the same intention to their actual relation with God, who is still their God. What is the logical tie, connecting the conclusion with the premisses? God is Being; He is the existent Being, consequently He cannot reign over the dead in their tombs; He reigns over the living. Relation with the living God requires true life, and actual relation requires actual life. Then those patriarchs are alive; and although their bodies, venerated at Hebron, be fallen into dust, their personal autonomous *ego* has not been touched by death. A Greek philosopher would have objected that the Saviour overpassed the limits of the proof required, and that His reasoning was incomplete, inasmuch as, wishing to establish the resurrection of the body, His only conclusion is the immortality of the soul. Different attempts have been made to show that the former doctrine is virtually contained in the latter. Those critics who deny that Jesus had full belief in the spirituality of the soul (and consequently in its immortality) as we believe in it to-day, who think that the Saviour, like His contemporaries, only conceived life in the other world through the reunion of body and soul, declare that in establishing the existence of that other life, He affirmed of necessity the resurrection. The life He attributes to the patriarchs is thus reduced to a promise of life, to a simple guarantee that one day their bodies will be reanimated, and that then they

will live. This exegesis is at variance, not only with the texts of the three evangelists, which testify to an actual and real existence of the servants of God whose bodies lie at Macphela, but also with the state of mind of the Sadducees. True, the reasoning of Jesus does not lead directly by a straight line to the resurrection; it resolves itself into a formal proof of life after the grave, beginning with death and independent of the body. But the Sadducean negation was in the first place directed against the spirituality of the soul<sup>1</sup> and its immortality; it excluded all permanence of the human being, of the personal, conscious *ego*. The resurrection is only one of the circumstances of that after-life, though undoubtedly the most prominent for the people, that which chiefly impressed them; the negation of this dogma was what distinguished, in their eyes, the heresy of their chiefs. In His reply the Saviour takes account not only of the difficulty proposed to Him, but especially of the state of mind which inspired it.

## II

How did Jesus regard man? The eminent dignity of human nature, which He further exalts by enriching it with a divine principle; the inestimable value of this life; the promise that all men may be the sons of God; that one day they will be united

<sup>1</sup> Josephus, *Jewish War*, 2, 8, 14: Ψυχῆς τε τὴν διαμονὴν καὶ τὰς καθ' Ἄιδου τιμωρίας καὶ τιμὰς ἀναιροῦσι. *Antiquities*, xviii. 1, 4: Σαδδουκαίοις δὲ τὰς ψυχὰς ὁ λόγος συναφανίζει τοῖς σώμασιν.

to His eternal beatitude, are the unshakable certitudes which form the substance of His gospel. But the destiny proposed is unattainable ; the purpose of God cannot be fulfilled, since an obstacle bars the way—sin. The mission of John the Baptist was essentially an apostolate of purification ; we remember his ardent call to penitence which so moved the crowd ; we remember how, beside the river and the springs of Salim, he fulminated against all classes of sinners, and imposed upon them a strange and singularly expressive rite.

When Jesus appeared a relaxation seemed to be produced, and the religious emotion which John had brought to its highest pressure subsided, or was at least allayed ; nevertheless, the denunciation of sin, which has overspread the soul and broken the ties with God, was no less conspicuous in the teaching of the Saviour. He did not describe the origin of moral evil ; He did not say whether it proceed from a guilty ascendant, or if it be traceable to psychological causes ; all He affirmed was its existence ; He saw it everywhere, and He pointed to its effects : men were turned away from God, and God was turned away from man ; the spontaneous outpourings of the heavenly Father's favour were interrupted, the anger of God was threatening. To save man and appease that anger was the mission of Jesus.

The preaching of the first days had one theme, repentance ; "After that John was delivered up Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the

kingdom of God, and saying : The time is accomplished, and the kingdom of God is at hand ; repent and believe the gospel." He invited all Israel to be converted ; that is to say, to turn back to God. The hearers He preferred, whom He sought out, with whom He delighted to be, were the public sinners who had been excommunicated by the high authorities of the law and the temple : " He is come to save that which was lost." The attribute which most adequately describes Him is that of Saviour. He pursued with biting irony the righteous who are puffed up with false sanctity and legal purity, who have no need of repentance.<sup>1</sup> In the prayer<sup>2</sup> which reflects His general teaching on God and on the world, the haunting dread of sin appears beneath the transparency of concise, long-meditated formulæ ; the appeal to God to pardon the faults we have committed, to preserve us from alluring temptations, takes its place immediately after the petition for the daily bread. God alone is good, all men are bad. That is what the eye of Jesus saw in humanity, and the picture is not prepossessing. To those who think the Galilean prophet too pessimistic, to whom His impression appears painful, gloomy, and against nature, we would suggest the remark that those who most worthily represent human dignity are not the poets who depicted life as a radiant pastoral, in which light-hearted boys and girls exult in the fulness of joy ; who conceived the divinity as without moral

<sup>1</sup> Luke xv. 1-10.<sup>2</sup> Luke xi. 2-4.

exigencies, splendid in the beauty of marble and ivory, invariably smiling upon his Asiatic or Hellenic devotee, whose passions have never known restraint ; who imagined the religious cult as an unbroken series of brilliant Panathenæa. These pale before a philosopher who traces a stern ideal of human life, who recognises in himself evil quartered in every centre of his activity, whose helplessness torments him, who constantly offers to the gods expiatory sacrifices. Let us not then be unjust to the conception of Jesus, especially as it neither lowers nor humiliates human nature. His belief is not that the sinner is incapable of any impulse whatsoever towards good ; He found amongst the excommunicated of the synagogue and the temple upright souls, capable of good sentiments, high moral aspirations, noble actions. But the fact remains nevertheless that humanity is sinful, that it has been turned from its right path, that the wrath of God hangs over it, and that the mission of Jesus was essentially a preaching of penance and salvation. "I am not ashamed of the gospel,"<sup>1</sup> wrote St. Paul ; "for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and to the Greek ; for the justice of God is revealed therein."

Sin is in the world because man has turned away from God, and the wrath of God hangs over the world. When we speak of the anger of God we attribute to Him, anthropomorphically, the sentiments

<sup>1</sup> Romans i. 16, 17.

proper to any moral being in the presence of evil and the violation of a law. The anger provoked by sin is, therefore, a reaction of the holiness of God against the revolt of man. This anger—or better, moral indignation—is not susceptible of outbursts of capricious passion, for such would dishonour it; it takes its source in the imperturbable love of good. Interpreting the revolt against God and its consequences according to the requirements and sanctions of human justice, representing the offended God after the model of the offended man, we say that the sinner incurs a debt, that the tie uniting him to his Creator is broken, that unless God changes in Himself, the effects of His goodness are suspended as regards man, and no longer reach him—at any rate, directly. For the restoration of the interrupted relationship, it is not enough that man should try to become good again; he must first be reconciled to God, discharging the old debt by satisfaction and expiation; or better, he cannot recover the former state of harmony except by freeing himself from the weight of the accumulated arrears. Some theologians refuse to admit this conception, judging it to be too juridical, too penal. God, they say, does not change; and therefore sin cannot touch Him; His attitude towards the sinner has never changed, and there is, therefore, no need for reconciliation. We also maintain that God does not change, but His rights are inalienable, and they have been injured; and just as society, which is not affected by the offence of one of its members, never-



theless changes its attitude towards him, so must we interpret the attitude of God towards the sinner. It is not enough, in order that the guilty member may be restored to favour and resume his former place, that he should promise henceforth to respect the law; he has first a debt to pay, and the pardon of society is only accorded him on that condition. Is it abusing analogy to introduce the same juridical element into our relations with the Creator? When the sinner turns away from God and constitutes himself His enemy he draws upon himself inevitably the enmity of heaven, which must avenge the pre-established moral order; and if the offender wishes to renew the former relation, it is not enough for him to promise unshakable fidelity for the time to come; he must first ask pardon and expiate his fault; that is why, in Catholic theology, conversion or return to God is a grace of reconciliation and sanctification at one and the same time. If the moral head of the universe were incapable of intense indignation against sin, if He were powerless to react against evil, He would be wanting in an essential element of perfection.

We have thought it well, not to say necessary, thus to view matters from the standpoint of God's anger and of the inalienable exigencies of His rights, in order to lead the reader to understand why Jesus suffered, and why, according to the testimony of His own conscience, He was bound to die in virtue of a predetermined plan. Now we may enter freely upon the history of the Passion, and pursue the subject without hindrance or hesitation.

## III

Expiation was among the fundamental notions of the religion of Israel. Moses assigned it an essential place in the legislation of the cult and in the ritual. The sinner can re-enter into favour with God only when he has discharged the debt he has contracted, only when he has expressed his repentance by means of the prescribed sacrifice, in a manner immolating himself in the immolation of the victim required as a substitute. The just man also is allowed to intercede with God on behalf of the guilty. His prayer will procure the divine mercy; and in offering his sufferings and his life in the place of the legal victim, he may himself become the victim, and be immolated as such. From these ideas regulating the relations between the penitent sinner and the justice of God, the prophets derived an extraordinary conception, a scheme of redemption which is of incomparable interest. It is worthy of close examination. They foresaw an ideal just man, who had never known sin, pure of all stain; and they describe Him as suffering and dying for the sins of His people.

In the lamentable crisis which overswept Israel, when, partly through its geographical position and partly through the rash alliances of its kings, it became the battlefield of the great empires which hemmed it in, the prophets took up the moral aspect

of the repeated misfortunes of the nation, its desolation and its ruin. According to them recovery would only be possible when the people kept strictly to the cult prescribed by God, and when the heart of the Israelite became an unfailing source of justice and sanctity. Turning then towards the future, they outlined an ideal restoration in which the material preoccupations of the Israelite were to give place to spiritual aspirations. The dreams of political power and military conquest were set aside. Israel, in the mind of God, was to be the light of the nations, and its future greatness was to be, before all, religious and moral. The instruments which the Saviour was to choose, in order to realise his plan and the conditions which would assure its success, were described in the canticles of unknown authorship, which by their powerful and pathetic inspiration stand alone among the writings of men.<sup>1</sup> The genius of Israel, existing almost always at high pressure, reaches here an elevation to which no one of himself would dare carry his imagination and his thought. The instrument of salvation is an innocent victim who, by his sufferings and death, is to expiate the sins of his people.

The question has been raised, and again recently,<sup>2</sup> whether the personage described under the name of "the Servant of God" was an individual. It is suggested that the whole people, Israel collectively,

<sup>1</sup> Isaias lii. 13-15, and liii.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Budde, *Die sogenannten Ebed-Jahwe-Lieder*, 1900.

is the despised and repulsive leper from whom men's faces are turned away ; that it is the nation, reduced to a feeble remnant, the stock continually devastated, now having only one shoot left, which has been thus punished, not for its own faults, but for those of the pagan peoples. The prophet looks upon its suffering as redemptory, and he has put upon the lips of the enemies of the people of God this canticle in honour of Israel, the just and pure from all sin ; the redeemed enemies are made to express their gratitude by celebrating the future glory of the servant of God "who divides the spoil with the strong." It is not for us to remark on the unlikelihood of the situations supposed by this exegesis. The opinion of recognised critics, who having no apologetic interest at stake are not suspect, is that it is contrary to the spirit and tendency of the poem.<sup>1</sup> The individuality of the Servant of God is kept up without wavering or inconsistency. The prophet's thought holds and maintains it throughout all the phases of his existence. After all, what matters the literary process by which the poet arrived at his conception, if by degrees it advanced from the collective to the personal servant, if here the individual redeemer arrived at by abstraction takes the symbolical name applied in other hymns of the same cycle to the national entity?

The following is a brief analysis of the poem :  
The prophet announces an event without parallel,

<sup>1</sup> Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaia*, Gottingen, 1892.

which no one will believe. A man of humble aspect, despised, infirm, from whom one turns away as from a leper, suffers without complaining ; he dies a violent death ; he is laid in a grave ; he rises from the dead. This Israelite, who bears heroically his moral sufferings and physical tortures, carries out a program of redemption. To the witnesses of his action he appears as a sinner chastised for his crimes without mercy ; but, in reality, he expiates the sins of his people. " He is cut off out of the land of the living ; for the wickedness of my people have I struck him." He is a perfectly just man ; he has no consciousness of any fault, and the great value of his suffering is attributed to his innocence. He dies, he is given a grave amongst criminals, and he comes to life again. His posterity will be numerous, and he will live, not as a collective being, not as a root which continually sprouts anew, for it is himself who rises again, since he himself rejoices in the long life of his children.<sup>1</sup>

We shall not be blamed for quoting the passage ; it is the natural preface to the passion of the Saviour. Renan reproduced it at the beginning of his *Vie de Jésus* ; he was captivated by its affecting beauty :

<sup>1</sup> Duhm draws attention to the moral aspect both of the anger of God which appears to be appeased by his holiness, and of the chastisement with which sin is visited. He observes further that the hero redeemer does not defy death or go himself to the torments as in the penitential rights of India. The Servant of God resigns himself to the sufferings sent him by Providence. Master of himself, he retains in the midst of his tortures a firm attitude which gives to his rôle its true moral value.

“Behold my servant shall understand ; he shall be exalted, and extolled, and shall be exceeding high. Even as many have feared him, for that his image was inglorious among men, and forasmuch as his spirit hath been other than that of the sons of men, so he shall be a cause of joy unto many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths before him ; for they shall see that which was not told to them, and they shall learn things they had not heard. Who hath believed our report ? and to whom is the arm of Yahweh revealed ? And he shall grow up as a tender plant before him, and as a root out of a thirsty ground. There is no beauty in him, nor comeliness ; and we have seen him, and there was no sightliness that we should desire him ; despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with suffering, like him from whom men turn away their faces ; we despised him, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows ; and we have thought him, as it were, chastised, and as one struck by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins, the chastisement which gives us peace has fallen upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep had gone astray, every one had turned aside into his own way, and Yahweh hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was misused and crushed, and he opened not his mouth ; as a lamb led to the slaughter, and a sheep is dumb before her shearer, so he opened not his mouth. He



was taken away by torture and by chastisement ; and, among those of his generation, who hath believed that he was cut off out of the land of the living, and struck for the wickedness of my people? And he was given a grave among malefactors, and his tomb was among the wicked ; although he hath not done any violence, neither was there deceit in his mouth. And Yahweh was pleased to break him with suffering ; after having laid down his life for sin, he shall see a multitude of children, and his days shall be multiplied, and the work of Yahweh shall be prosperous in his hand."

The critics have searched among personages of holy and sacrificed life, those who might have inspired the author of the canticle of the "Servant of God." It is not Jeremias, Duhm observes;<sup>1</sup> the prophet of the Lamentations constantly opens his lips to complain, while "the man of grief," when brought to the torture, "is dumb as a lamb before his shearer." It is not Job, for whom the problem of suffering remains at the end unexplained ; while our author is remarkable for the loftiness of his point of view, and the moral value he gives to trial. The historical, living realisation of the "Man of Sorrows" occurred only once, and it is not found in the history of Israel. All the personages examined and scrutinised remain far below the ideal sketched by the prophet ; and the disconcerted critic admits that he is in the presence of an enigma. We have to pass

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*

over Jeremias, Job, Elias, and come to Jesus Christ. Who, in reading this page, is not involuntarily reminded of Him; who does not recognise in His person the ideal just man, suffering and dying to expiate the sins of His people? We are not called upon to defend the spontaneous impulse to identify the Man of Sorrows with the victim of Golgotha. If ever a divine voice was heard by humanity, if it be possible that God has spoken to us through men, inspiring them with the vision of the future, leading their thoughts and hopes beyond their natural frontiers, are we rash in saying, using the human criterion alone, that we have heard that voice from heaven?

#### IV

The canticle of the Servant of God stands isolated in the prophetic literature in which it is embedded, and we are unable to fix the prototype and the human events which determined this incomparable burst of inspiration. It appears to have been produced by a complete abstraction from history; it is wholly turned to the future, and it is the future alone which answers it. Between the hero-redeemer described by the prophet and the victim of Calvary there is an objective connection, which no attentive critic fails to remark. Duhm, at the end of his commentary on the canticle, points out the close union between the Old Testament and the New, and the

superiority of the latter over the former. Israel was doomed to construct mighty dreams and conceive hopes of immense scope, which it was powerless to realise; while through Jesus the dreams descended from the domain of the idea, and the hopes became facts.

But did Jesus Himself recognise in the picture of the Man of Sorrows His program of action and the task to be performed? Was it this prophecy which shaped His life, which was reflected in His passion? This question divides the historians of the Saviour. The more numerous party, comprising different shades of opinion, and even totally opposed schools, believe that Jesus foretold His death, attributing to it all the moral—if not redemptory—value which we glean from the canticle of the Servant. In this category orthodox and advanced critics are found side by side: the former suppose in the Saviour prophetic knowledge and a deliberate intention in accordance with a plan of redemption already concerted; the latter explain the prediction by natural presentiments, and certitude humanly well founded. The other group consists of those critics who think that Jesus did not wish to die; according to them, He was betrayed by Judas, and apprehended at the moment when He had made up His mind to flee and retire into Galilee. This hypothesis is defended by two French exegetists, Albert Réville<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Jésus de Nazareth*, 1897.

and Stapfer.<sup>1</sup> It is far from our thoughts to speak without respect for these two scholars who call themselves Christian; yet we say with pain that the person of Jesus has never been more disfigured or more humiliated than in these writings, which bear the names of a sometime pastor and a professor of theology. According to these two critics this is how the Sanhedrin resolved to arrest Jesus, and succeeded in executing their plan :

Jesus, staying at Bethany, or at one of the farms near Jerusalem, went every morning into the city, where He preached. "He intended, according to His custom, to keep the feast of the Pasch; this He had a great desire to do, and it appears, with the strongest confirmation, that the course of events took Him by surprise. He had no idea, He could not possibly have had an idea, of the inconceivable rapidity with which they would develop." On the Wednesday, the resolution was finally taken to arrest Him and put Him to death; but the execution of the project was suspended and deferred until after the feast. The Sanhedrists feared a popular tumult; they were afraid of the sympathetic Galilean crowd, the pilgrims from the diaspora, who had no hatred of Jesus. They were apprehensive also lest Pilate, coming up from Cæsarea to Jerusalem for the solemnity, should resist the arrest and hinder the execution of capital punishment. "All of which," says Stapfer, "was arranged with great intelligence;

<sup>1</sup> *La Mort et la Résurrection de Jésus-Christ*, 1898.

it was judged, and rightly, that to arrest Jesus when the city was crowded with visitors would be in a high degree imprudent; and as, besides, it was forbidden to leave Jerusalem before the feast was completely over, the Sanhedrin were practically certain that their prey would not escape them." The discussion and decision of the assembly were immediately carried to Jesus by disciples, for these were not wanting to Him in the city and in the Sanhedrin itself, as, for example, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. "It is very possible, even probable, that one of these two caused Jesus to be warned, on the Wednesday itself, of all that had been plotted against Him.

"Jesus then made up His mind to remain quietly at Jerusalem during the days of unleavened bread, for it had been expressly agreed: 'Not on the festival day,'<sup>1</sup> and to leave hastily the moment the days of unleavened bread were over, and remain concealed for a time. He thought perhaps that He could hide with the twelve; or, as we shall take for granted later on, not without foundation, that He could arrange to rejoin them later on in Galilee. This plan would have been carried out but for the treason of Judas. It was the Iscariot, the man of Karioth, who led the Sanhedrin to make the arrest during the feast, and who thus fixed the day of the death of Jesus." The traitor heard it said that Jesus was about to leave for Galilee, and that His disciples

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xxvi. 5; Mark xiv. 2.

were to rejoin Him after the feast.<sup>1</sup> He must have carried to the Sanhedrists immediately his master's plan of escape, and moved them to strike without delay. "If he heard Jesus speak of a rendezvous in Galilee,<sup>2</sup> he feared perhaps that He might escape; it is not impossible that he may have said to the Sanhedrin: 'If you wait until after the feast, I can promise you nothing; for He will have left Jerusalem.' The Sanhedrin was convinced, and gave Judas the men necessary; and he led them, walking in front."

Sabatier<sup>3</sup> gave his opinion of Réville's *Vie de Jésus* shortly after its publication, and he specially rejected the explanation there given of the death of Jesus. "Notwithstanding the address and ingenuity with which it is developed, we think the explanation is beset with very grave difficulty, not only in the presence of the texts, but also considering the situation in general and the psychology of Jesus." This condemnation could not have been more severe

<sup>1</sup> Stapfer, following Réville, thinks that the words "After I shall be risen again I will go before you into Galilee" (Mark xiv. 28; Matthew xxvi. 32) have been disfigured by the apostles and have lost their primitive sense. "It seems to us at all events probable, if not certain," he says (*op. cit.*, p. 134), "that in the words 'I will go before you into Galilee' we have a distorted utterance of Jesus making an assignation with His apostles after the temporary separation necessitated by the plots of His enemies. In any case He gave them a positive rendezvous, and the apostles, calling it to mind afterwards, very naturally construed it as a prediction of the resurrection."

<sup>2</sup> p. 165.

<sup>3</sup> *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, t. xxxvi. p. 179.



or better supported. And, as a matter of fact, in opposition to this hypothesis, to which the trivial incidents, the little schemes penetrated and defeated, give the air of legend, there stands the historical construction of which we have spoken. All the evangelical writers, St. Mark as well as St. Luke, St. Matthew as well as St. John, have borne their part, and they appear as exact and faithful witnesses to the primitive knowledge of the fact. It appears from a number of incontestable texts that Jesus knew that He must suffer and die, that He predicted the time and circumstances of His passion, that He was not taken unawares by events, that He looked upon His death as a work of redemption.

Until the confession of Cæsarea, which closes the Galilean epoch, the synoptic writings are silent as to the sorrowful phase through which the Saviour was to pass ; He does not appear to have spoken clearly to His disciples about His future sufferings and His death. At the beginning of His preaching, when the new enthusiasm drew crowds to Him, when the words of the newly-risen prophet were received with delight, the joyous exclamations are marred by a presentiment of grief. The three evangelists have noted it. "The disciples of John and the Pharisees used to fast ; and they come and say to Him : "Why do the disciples of John and the Pharisees fast ; but Thy disciples do not fast ? And Jesus saith to them : Can the children of the marriage fast as long as the bridegroom is with them ? As long as they have the

bridegroom with them they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they shall fast in those days."<sup>1</sup> The gloomy vision lasted only a moment; it was instantly dispelled by the brightness of those first days, by their promise of a brilliant and untroubled Messianic future; the apostles do not seem to have kept the memory of it.

The prediction of the death of Jesus indeed broke among them like a thunderclap; and it led to a scene (we say it without fear of contradiction), the most moving in the Saviour's history. Peter, enlightened by the heavenly Father, had confessed Jesus to be the Messiah, and Jesus declared him blessed and promised him an eternal recompense. The Saviour is then led to speak of the future awaiting the Messiah. "And He began<sup>2</sup> to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the ancients and high priests, and the scribes, and be killed; and after three days rise again. And He spoke the word openly. And Peter taking Him, began to rebuke Him. Who turning about and seeing His disciples, threatened Peter, saying: Go behind me, Satan, because thou savourest not the things that are of God, but that are of men." Jesus announced that the Son of man *must* suffer many things, be rejected by the official religious authority of Jerusalem, and be killed. It is the last

<sup>1</sup> Mark ii. 18-20.

<sup>2</sup> Mark viii. 31-33.

word which outraged Peter. The reason<sup>1</sup> why Jesus must die is more than utility, more than a moral obligation ; it is a strict duty. That which came to Him as a precept from afar He accepted of His own free will as a divine command. That precept directed the life of the Son of man, and marked its vicissitudes ; it traced out before Him the sorrowful road which led to the cross ; it told Him when the moment came to embrace it. The Saviour at last broke His silence and revealed the secret which He had carried in His breast for three years. Now at length He was able freely to express Himself, since the disciples' faith in His Messianic dignity was full. For another reason, too, He had to speak ; that, their hope of a new kingdom, in spite of their long intercourse with Him, notwithstanding the distinctness of the parables, did not as yet go beyond the materialistic conceptions of the Pharisees. He revealed to them that those who wish to enter the kingdom must follow Him in His sorrowful journey towards that Jerusalem who kills the prophets ; that they must pass by the blood-sprinkled way marked out by the slain bodies of the holiest and the best among the servants of God. " If any man will follow Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it,

<sup>1</sup> Plummer (*The Gospel According to St. Luke*, p. 247) rightly opposes Δεῖ to ὀφείλεν and to ἐπρεπεν. The first impresses rather logical necessity than moral objection or mere fitness.

and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospel shall save it.”<sup>1</sup>

He multiplies allusions to His death, from the date of His last journey to Jerusalem. The Pharisees inform Him that Herod wishes to kill Him, and advise Him to leave. “Go and tell that fox,” He replies, “Behold I cast out devils, and do cure to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I am consummated. Nevertheless I must walk to-day and to-morrow, because it cannot be that a prophet shall perish out of Jerusalem.”<sup>2</sup>

He seems absorbed in this thought, which becomes even agonising. He refers to the future in two bold comparisons: “I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled? And I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptised, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished?”<sup>3</sup>

To set the earth ablaze, to light the fire which will purify it and restore it to health, and to die, are the two passions of His heart. He recalls, in order to describe the conquest of the world at which He aims, one of those awful fires which in the East lay waste a plain in a moment, crossing the streams by way of the reeds, running to the plateaux and even to the hills, while man is powerless to resist. And a baptism is awaiting Him, a baptism of blood, and He suffers until He has been baptised. The agony of Gethsemani and the bloody sweat have already begun for Him.

<sup>1</sup> Mark viii. 34, 35; Luke ix., 23, 24.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xiii. 32, 33.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xii. 49, 50.

## V

Who imposed on Him this duty of suffering? Why was the precept fore-ordained which forced Him to leave this life by a violent death? Are we to reduce the certitude with which He foretold His death to presentiments excited by His knowledge of the legal authorities, their machinations against Him, and His experience of their malevolence? When He becomes the victim of the hatred of the chiefs of the people, of those who sit upon the chair of Moses and who sacrifice in the temple, will He fall as the prophets fell? Will His name, inscribed in the martyrology of the servants of God, be only one more witness to the hypocrisy of the self-styled righteous, one more example to encourage us to do our duty in spite of threats of death? We can demonstrate that Jesus not only predicted His death, but that He regarded it as an essential phase of the Messianic drama, and not merely the ordinary act which seals man's life everywhere, which in the case of a prophet is an act of blood. Moreover, He looked upon it as a sacrifice, and He attributed to it the value of a redemption.

These two conclusions are accepted by the greater number of critics. They are founded first of all upon the reply given by Jesus to the sons of Zebedee when they asked for the two highest places in His

kingdom; but especially upon the Eucharistic meal. The circumstances in which the funeral feast was kept, the precision of the words used at it, the wealth of symbol those words contain, has furnished the question, "Why did He die?" with a clear and profound answer, which has inspired the whole Christian theology of the Redemption.

The Saviour, being aroused by the arrogant request of James and John, explains to them once more the need for detachment and for suffering, ending with these words: "The Son of man also is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life for the redemption of many,"<sup>1</sup> *δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν*. It is established that the word *λύτρον*, if here it translates the Hebrew *copher*, can only signify, in this text, a redemption. The sense of protection and defence has neither literary nor theological support. Jesus, according to the reformer of German dogma, who would, at any cost, eliminate from Christian belief all idea of redemption and expiation, only died to protect other men against death.<sup>2</sup> All those who have faith in Him, who, following His example, renounce self, benefit by that protection. This was for Ritschl the readiest means to the desired end, preferable to a direct attack upon the significant word.

Critics of different schools and tendencies maintain

<sup>1</sup> Mark x. 45. Vulgate "redemptionem." In A.V. and R.V. it is "ransom."

<sup>2</sup> *Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung*, ii. 85.



the sense of redemption. In biblical literature this term denotes a sum of money paid for the redemption of a field,<sup>1</sup> or of slaves.<sup>2</sup> A captive was delivered<sup>3</sup> by the λύτρον; by it one was freed from service,<sup>4</sup> from forced labour, from deserved death.<sup>5</sup>

The word redemption is the exact and full translation of the Greek word which we find in St. Mark. The death of Christ is then a redemption, that is to say, a moral "price" which frees us from moral servitude. What is the servitude from which He frees us?

According to Wendt, Jesus gave His life as a redemption to deliver men from the mortal anguish of suffering and death.<sup>6</sup> Jesus declared Himself the consoler; He asked all those who have been wounded in the struggle of life to take refuge in Him, for He felt Himself strong enough to bind up wounds and strengthen hearts. "Come to me all you that labour and are burdened and I will refresh you."<sup>7</sup> The reply made to the sons of Zebedee must be understood in the light of this saying. The courage with which He endures suffering, with which He goes to meet the death He has foreseen and desired, is itself a redemption and a deliverance. Jesus, then, would be a superior Stoic; He emulates Zeno of Kitium, but surpasses him by His firmer belief in the immortality of the soul. He would have men know that

<sup>1</sup> Leviticus xxv. 24-51

<sup>2</sup> Leviticus xix. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Isaias xiv. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Numbers iii. 46-51.

<sup>5</sup> Exodus xxi. 30.

<sup>6</sup> *Die Lehre Jesu*, p. 515.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew xi. 28.

they must face death, not with the despair of those who have no hope, with the bitter, inconsolable regret of the materialist. Instructed by his master, the disciple is to understand that this life is only a preparation ; that death is a twilight to be followed by the dayspring of another life, and that divine. The deliverance Jesus wrought for humanity was to accustom men to hope, to exhort them to look at death from the point of view of God Himself.

Whatever be the beauty of this interpretation it must be held as incomplete ; nor is it in harmony with the biblical ideas which obtain in the New Testament. Professor Beyschlag, of Halle, declares<sup>1</sup> that the bondage from which Jesus frees us is the bondage of sin. This theologian is careful to exclude the idea of the expiation of a debt contracted by the sinner as regards God. He holds that the sense of the words of Jesus is gathered from the immediate context. He has just heard the selfish request of the brothers. Deeply agitated at finding even yet among His nearest disciples ambitions so material, He attacks this worldly spirit, this spirit of sin, which so far from diminishing by contact with Himself has grown stronger : He wishes to break and destroy it by His painful and humiliating death, hoping that by His cross they will be crucified to the world, and the world to them.<sup>2</sup> The Son of man, according to Professor Beyschlag, gave His life

<sup>1</sup> *Neutestamentliche Theologie*, i. pp. 152 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> St. Paul to the Galatians, vi. 14.

a ransom to deliver His disciples from the spirit of sin.

We know why the eminent professor has taken refuge in this hypothesis: he did not wish to believe that the Saviour established a connection between His death and the remission of sins; the orthodox dogma of the redemption is, he says, of apostolic origin; we look for it in vain among the authentic sayings of Jesus. Forced, however, to admit that the servitude from which we are delivered by the death of the Saviour is sin, he has reduced it from the spirit of sin to the carnal spirit. There is nothing to say upon this explanation but to qualify it as arbitrary: Bernard Weiss declares that in this text there is no question of the spirit of sin.<sup>1</sup>

Let us go back now to the exegesis of the text of St. Mark. Jesus declares that He will give His life as a redemption for many. Evidently the Saviour does not intend to say that His death will dispense men from dying. The Son of man must die, He says; it was necessary that Christ should die, He will repeat later to the disciples at Emmaus. This duty belongs to the Messianic function, of which He is the titular; His death is an undertaking attaching to His mission as the founder of the kingdom of God. As such it is that He dies, in order to complete the kingdom, to enable many to become members of it, to remove the obstacle which stands in the way of the heavenly

<sup>1</sup> *Lehrbuch der Biblischen Theologie des N.T.*, 1895, p. 75.

Father's favour. Now that obstacle is sin. The reply to the sons of Zebedee naturally recalls an anterior declaration of Jesus upon the helplessness of man to save Himself. What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul? The soul, in this question, can mean nothing but eternal life. It is very clear that man is powerless to recover eternal life when he has lost it, that he is not in a state to give anything proportionate to the ransom required. But it is a fundamental doctrine in the gospel that all men are sinners, that they are all lost; they all then need salvation. Jesus will deliver up His life as an exchange and a ransom. Those who believe in Him will profit by His act. Jesus solved the enigma of His death when He represented it as the means of saving His disciples from the damnation which they could not escape through the fact of their sin. Without doubt the disciples of Jesus, as members of the kingdom, are assured of the pardon of the heavenly Father; but the realisation of the kingdom of God and of the new relationship with God was contingent upon the discharge of the old debt contracted through sin.<sup>1</sup>

The meal the Saviour took with His disciples on the eve of His suffering appears under all aspects as a funeral repast; it was an anticipation, as the anointing of Bethany was an anticipated embalmment. The death of the Master then presiding at the table was

<sup>1</sup> Weiss, *loc. cit.*

the supreme element of the situation. It inspired the preliminaries, and all the words Jesus used. The legal rites regulating the celebration of the Pasch are transformed into testatory dispositions. The simple elements, the bread, the cup of wine, by an audacity of comparison warranted only by His omnipotence and prescience, are instituted as symbols of His body about to be immolated, and of His blood, which is to be poured out. Everything now is the figure and prediction of that death, its moment, its significance, its benefits. Judas, found out, rises from the table to hasten on the catastrophe; when the meal is over the Master also will rise; He will knot His girdle and fasten His cloak to go to offer Himself to death.

Especially of recent years, in the wake of Harnack's study of the Eucharistic elements,<sup>1</sup> criticism has addressed itself particularly to the accounts of the paschal meal; and it is supposed to have shaken them, by reducing to a very diminished minimum the strictly primitive words. These theologians distinguish two pairs of accounts: the one comprises St. Mark's and St. Matthew's; the second is composed of St. Paul's narration and that of St. Luke. Their conclusion is that the formulæ attributed to the Saviour, through comparison one with another, have undergone successive amplifications, to which the evangelists and St. Paul consented, in order to harmonise the Holy Supper with the progress of dogma and of the Eucharistic rites. The following

<sup>1</sup> *Texte und Untersuchungen: Brod und Wasser*, vii.

table is a synopsis of the different accounts and their variants :—

St. Mark :      Take ye . . . . . This is my body.

St. Matthew : Take ye and eat : This is my body.

St. Paul :                      This is my body,  
   which shall be  
   delivered for you.

St. Luke :                      This is my body,  
   which is given for  
   you.

St. Mark

St. Matthew

St. Paul :      *Do this for the commemoration of me.*

St. Luke :      *Do this for a commemoration of me.*

St. Mark :      This is my blood (the blood) of the  
   new testament.

St. Matthew : Drink ye all of this : for this is my  
   blood (the blood) of the new testa-  
   ment.

St. Paul :      *This chalice is the new testament in  
   my blood.*

St. Luke :      *This is the chalice, the new testament  
   in my blood.*

St. Mark :<sup>1</sup>      Which shall be shed for many. . .

St. Matthew :<sup>2</sup> Which shall be shed for many unto  
   remission of sins.

St. Paul :      *This do ye, as often as you shall  
   drink, for the commemoration of  
   me.*

St. Luke :      Which shall be shed for you.

<sup>1</sup> τὸ ἐκχυνόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν.

<sup>2</sup> τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυνόμενον εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν.



We observe that the formulæ of St. Paul and St. Luke contain an important element which is not found in St. Mark and St. Matthew. They make mention of an order given by Jesus to repeat the meal : " Do this for the commemoration of Me ; this do ye as often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of Me." On the other hand, St. Matthew alone states that the blood is shed "unto remission of sins." The formula of St. Mark then is more jejune ; from which circumstance the critics assume the liberty to pronounce it to be primitive, and the only formula which gives us the exact words of Jesus. Jülicher has made use of the variants and amplifications of these texts with his accustomed sagacity and subtlety. He opposes the coupled accounts of St. Mark and St. Matthew to the other pair consisting of those of St. Paul and St. Luke, which he looks upon as having been enriched by the apostolic tradition. Now in the two first evangelists, he points out, there is no mention made of a rite instituted by Jesus Christ, nor is there any exhortation to repeat the paschal repast. What did Jesus really do at the farewell meal ? He wished to announce His death. The scene of the presentation, first of the bread, then of the cup of wine, is only a parable in action. We know that the Saviour loved that kind of instruction which consists of demonstrations with objects. But how is the bread to be compared with His body, the wine with His blood ? The Saviour in offering to His disciples a broken piece of bread signified to them that His body

was to be broken; the wine poured out was a figure of His blood about to be shed. It was not only the prophecy of the death, but the parable also revealed to the apostles the benefits which that death was to confer. The blood poured out for many showed that it was to be a pledge of salvation. There is therefore no question of a rite being instituted, Jülicher concludes; a scene which is merely an announcement is not repeated after the event.

To show how incomplete is this explanation would carry us beyond the scope of this work. We restrict ourselves to the remark that the parable, if it is permissible for us to use the word, is not sufficiently interpreted. Jülicher only takes account of one *tertium comparationis*, ἐκλασεν for the bread and the body, ἐκχυνόμενον for the wine and the blood. But there remains another quite as explicit. The Saviour, in order to prefigure His body to be broken, His blood to be poured out, takes eatable and drinkable elements. Did He choose these without end or purpose? Moreover, He gives the express order to eat and to drink; to eat the broken bread, His broken body; to drink the wine poured into the cup, His blood to be shed. Thus we must double the comparison. Jesus foretells His death, which is to be a source of blessings; He also orders him who would participate in these blessings acquired by His passion, to eat and to drink. Is not the repetition of the Eucharistic supper thus imposed?

Must we not look here for the origin of this sacrament?

One conclusion of Jülicher's exegesis we retain: the death of Jesus is to be for His disciples a source of benefits. Before beginning to discuss the nature of those benefits, we wish to examine the starting-point, concerning which all are agreed. If the formula of St. Matthew is fuller than St. Mark's, if those of St. Paul and St. Luke contain elements unknown to the accounts of the first two evangelists, are we therefore bound to suppose a progressive development of the Eucharistic dogma, the different phases of which are noted and recorded in these formulæ? Is it allowable to believe that those writers of their own authority extended the shorter form of St. Mark? All the critics regard that formula as primitive, and alone authentic. The others would be explanatory emendations, introduced to support and invest with the authority of the Saviour, rites, symbols, and beliefs which sprang up independently of Him. To us it seems that St. Mark's formula, if it has any other significance than that of the others, is an enigma; we are unwilling to think that Jesus on the eve of His death would have left with His apostles a mysterious utterance, without so much as a hint towards its interpretation. St. Mark, moreover, set down the preaching of St. Peter at a time when the Eucharistic rite, enriched with all the symbolic allusions with which it was instinct, was celebrated everywhere.

Thus it would have to be admitted that this evangelist wished to restore the true formula, to protest against contemporary beliefs and customs, and bring back to their exact import the words pronounced by Jesus in the farewell repast. We think, on the contrary, that the simple formula: "This is my body, this is my blood (the blood) of the new testament, which is shed for many," is in harmony with the celebration of the holy Eucharist as St. Mark witnessed it; that it finds its true context in the fuller formulæ which are parallel to it, by which its signification is made clearer; and if we conclude that the evangelist foreshortened and abridged the words of Jesus, the sense of which was guaranteed by constant and all but daily usage, we do not think ourselves entirely devoid of all critical sense.

In these accounts there are present three ideas so intimately connected together that they would mutually evoke one another; whoever implanted one of these in the complex Jewish mind would infallibly awaken the other two. Undoubtedly, in the first place the Saviour wished to announce His death by presenting successively the symbols figuring His body and His blood. This separation of the two substantial elements of His human organism and the express statement that His blood is to be shed, impart to the last supper the character of a true prophecy; in the next place, that death is not natural, it is violent, it is bloody, like that of a victim of which the blood is spilt; lastly, it is beneficent,

for it is a redemption. That blood is shed for many, says St. Mark. According to St. Matthew, it is poured out for many in remission of sins. All the critics allow that Jesus Himself attributed to His death the value of a redemption.

The idea of a new compact, the seal of which is the shed blood, is derived as clearly from the four accounts as are the conclusions we have already drawn from the reply given to the sons of Zebedee. We might at once abandon all exegetic study if, as Wrede would have us do, we must cut away from the primitive account the mention of that compact, because it disturbs the parallelism of the symbols and destroys the harmony of the phrase.<sup>1</sup> That testament, ratified by blood, is immovably imbedded in its environment and cannot be withdrawn from it without violence. In order to understand this compact, this testament now spoken of for the first time, we have to go back to the testament of Sinai,<sup>2</sup> which, beyond all doubt, the Saviour Himself had in mind, both as symbol and type. God freely chose Israel among all peoples to shine as a light upon earth. He promises it His blessing; He gives it the pledges of a special Providence, and, by verbal laws, points out the conditions upon which His mercies are vouchsafed. God and Israel are both bound by a contract; the act is sealed by a solemn ceremony; the memory of the sacrifice in the desert

<sup>1</sup> *Zeitschrift für die N. Wissenschaft*, i. p. 69 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> Exodus xxiv.

still makes its impression upon us, whatever be our belief, and in spite of the distance of time. "Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rising in the morning he built an altar at the foot of the mount, and twelve stones for the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, and they offered holocausts, and sacrificed pacific victims of calves to Yahweh. Moses took half the blood and put it into bowls, and the rest he poured upon the altar. And taking the book of the covenant he read it in the hearing of the people, and they said: All things that Yahweh hath spoken we will do; we will be obedient. And he took the blood and he sprinkled it upon the people, and he said: This is the blood of the covenant which Yahweh hath made with you concerning all these words." The blood of the immolated victim constitutes the signature. Being poured upon the people and upon the altar at one and the same time, it attests that the compact is binding upon both contracting parties, God and the people of Israel. Some critics, who wish to remain within the limits of the Old Testament, and who regard the scene in the desert as the model of the new covenant inaugurated by Jesus Christ, conclude that the death of the Saviour was not a redemption. As in the book of the Exodus, they say, the blood poured out is not the cause of the covenant, but the seal of ratification; so in the New Testament the blood of Jesus is not productive of grace and pardon, but merely a pledge that the



covenant has been contracted, a ratification of the pardon already accorded. We cannot believe that Jesus would have spoken so solemnly of the benefits which His death conferred in order to lead to a subtlety which His hearers could not have understood. We cannot conceive how Jesus, dying as He did to save men, establishing as He did a connection between His blood, the divine grace, and the remission of sins, could have reduced His salvation to the pledge of a pardon with which it had nothing to do.

The Saviour, in the short farewell scene, spoke to Jews to whom the ideas of sacrifice and bloody expiation were familiar. He had adapted the Messianic salvation about to be realised to the prophetic program of the Old Testament. All Israelites, even those unacquainted with the Scriptures, like the apostles, were expecting a new covenant, which Jeremias<sup>1</sup> had described as a covenant of grace and universal pardon. They are also aware that the blood with which the Israelites were sprinkled in the desert had a purifying virtue; they were unshakable in their belief that blood was a necessity for the expiation of sin; that idea lay at the foundation of their religious faith. "Almost all things," the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews wrote later, "according to the law, are cleansed with blood; and without shedding of blood there is no remission."<sup>2</sup> These ideas, which were never in abeyance, were in a sense the

<sup>1</sup> xxxi. 33.

<sup>2</sup> ix. 22.

matrix into which Jesus poured His words ; words which, but for those ideas, would have been undecipherable enigmas ; the state of mind of the twelve hearers is, in fact, the living context to the brief, concentrated phrases, which He leaves them as His last testament. Such is the primitive basis, the cornerstone of the mystery of the redemption ; the rock upon which the apostles and doctors have built is opened up and revealed by the Saviour Himself. Let us not then be taken aback by the reiterated, consistent declarations of St. Paul, that we were reconciled to God by the death,<sup>1</sup> by the cross,<sup>2</sup> by the blood,<sup>3</sup> of Jesus.

We may reject the Christian belief that Jesus expiated on account of men and in their place ; but if we wish to connect our moral and religious life with His, we are not warranted on grounds of exegesis and history in doubting the authenticity of the accounts which represent Him as Victim and as Saviour. Those were redeeming words which the heavenly Father revealed to the disciples and the Galilean crowd, which brought within man's moral horizon the divine ideal of becoming like God ; there was redemption in the miraculous power which stirred the primitive faith or strengthened it ; the Saviour personally called publicans and sinful women to repentance. But, above all, in the true sense of the word (we accept the juridical, legal aspect of the

<sup>1</sup> Romans v. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians ii. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Colossians i. 20.

vicarious sacrifice), the blood shed for many in remission of sins is an expiation. Jesus became the Son of man ; voluntarily He assumed our infirmities, our human destiny ; He made use of none of the privileges to which His miraculous birth and the hypostatic union entitled Him. Like His brethren then, He must quit life by the door of death. And He willed that death should be dolorous, bloody, like that of the victims for which He substituted Himself. We do not wish to reconstruct the scene of the drama of Gethsemani and Calvary ; we do not wish to investigate and analyse the blood there shed, to discover in it the mysterious power of purification and absolution. We are not rabbis ; we have none of the inquisitiveness of Joseph de Maistre. Besides, the penny catechism informs the infant Christian that the smallest of the acts of Jesus was able to procure for us the divine pardon, that the efficacy of His death is derived from His great love for men, from His sanctity, His divine sonship.

The child's prayer to the Redeemer may be repeated by the adult without dishonour to his intelligence, or any suggestion of impoverished culture. We have known many, either in the afternoon of their days or at some turning-point in life, when the excitement of positive studies had abated, to return to preoccupations of cleansing and repairing their moral existence ; who have found food for reflection in the prophecy of the Servant of God, in that strange ensemble of convergent ideas. However

grand, however moving, be that ideal of the Man of Sorrows, it was surpassed by the sacrifice of Him who was called Jesus Christ, who appeared in Palestine, agonised at Gethsemani, and expired upon a cross erected on Golgotha.

## VIII

### THE EMPTY TOMB

LIKE the Galileans at the dawn of the Resurrection morning, we now come to examine the tomb of Jesus. We wish to see if the sepulchre has been violated, if the body of the prophet, subject to the laws of dissolution, has returned to nothing; or if, according to our faith, it was awakened from its sleep and restored to life. No one has a right to take no interest in this historical problem; no one has a right to stand apart or observe with idle curiosity the Christian multitude which now for centuries has consented to adore the humble preacher of the kingdom of God, believing Him to have risen from the dead. At the one visit at least which every reverent mind pays to that tomb to find out what took place there on the morning of the third day, it is not enough to peer in and then go away; the investigation must be continued until it leads to a clear conviction. If the inquiries at length take the side of negative criticism, the visitor must have demonstrated to himself that he has shattered and destroyed the gospel accounts, that he has explained in a satisfactory and conclusive manner how the

sepulchre was opened and the body withdrawn, and how the apparitions can have been nothing but hallucinations.

Apart from the attraction of curiosity, there is a question of conscience which grows in magnitude and importance. We may be interested in the examination of an historical problem; but there is something at stake, and that—without hesitation we say it—is faith. The holy women returned believing from the vacant tomb, bringing back the aromatics with which they would have embalmed the body of the prophet. John<sup>1</sup> went down into the vault; he saw and believed. Then the other apostles one after another were convinced of the fact. In the confusion caused by the crowning disaster, their faith had failed. His shameful death had put the Master on a level with common assassins and lowest criminals; He had been powerless to defend Himself; God had refused to aid Him who called Himself His Son, who had appealed to His divine Sonship when He urged men to have confidence in the heavenly Father; heaven had been shut inexorably. Such was the stumbling-block on which their faith was overthrown. Jesus was vanquished—finally vanquished; and His work, His life, was overwhelmed in the bloody catastrophe of the crucifixion. So great had been their discomfiture that the apostles remained incredulous in spite of what the women said; only after seeing, hearing, touching the resuscitated body would

<sup>1</sup> St. John's Gospel, xx. 8.



they consent to believe. From the certitude of the resurrection they rose to faith in Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God. The triumph of the resurrection morning restored the harmony of His life which His death had broken ; words which had been spoken to them before, not understood at the time and since forgotten, now returned to their minds ; their faith revived in the light of that illuminating fact. Jesus risen is the supreme apologetic fact of the origin of Christianity, the motive of credibility which searched the souls of the apostles and of their hearers, and which led them to assent to the mysterious divinity of the Saviour, till then not fully manifested.

An apostle, indeed, may be defined as a witness of the resurrection. Matthias is elected on that qualification and for that reason.<sup>1</sup> When Peter, on the day of Pentecost, makes his declaration to the crowd of citizens and pilgrims, Hellenist Jews and Hebrew Jews, that Jesus is the Christ, his solemn assurance that He rose from the dead begets the Messianic faith in three thousand of them.<sup>2</sup> A few days later the same statement is reiterated to those who are astonished at the cure operated by Peter : " But the Author of Life you killed, whom God hath raised from the dead ; of which we are witnesses."<sup>3</sup> The chief of the priests and the officer

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 21, 22.

<sup>2</sup> ii. 32. " This Jesus hath God raised again, whereof all we are witnesses."

<sup>3</sup> iii. 15.

of the temple are grieved that they teach the people, and preach in Jesus the resurrection from the dead ; and they have them arrested. They are brought the following day before the supreme authorities and questioned as to the name invoked by them to cure the paralytic. Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, declares the essence and ground of his faith in two sonorous periods, free from the Jewish phraseology : " By the name of our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God hath raised from the dead, even by Him this man standeth here before you whole. Jesus is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved." All the positive portion of St. Paul's address to the Athenians depends upon the resurrection. Having put before his hearers the Christian idea, which is penitence, and having shown the prospect of the judgment to come, he hangs his argument, as it were, on the victory over death of " the chosen Man."<sup>1</sup> " God, indeed, having winked at the times of this ignorance now declareth unto men that all should everywhere do penance. Because He hath appointed a day wherein He will judge the world in equity by the Man whom He hath appointed : giving faith to all, by raising Him up from the dead."

It was found necessary at the beginning of the

<sup>1</sup> xvii. 32.

evangelical preaching to bring into special prominence the extraordinary fact we are now about to examine. Is its value less for us who look at it across nineteen centuries? Is it so unapproachable as to be beyond the reach of certitude, that we are bound to exclude it from our motives for believing? At one time, scarcely forty years ago, the liberal theologians were convinced that they had destroyed the credit of the gospel accounts, and explained the faith in the resurrection by hallucinations. They did not fear to make the faith of the historian and the thinker dependent upon his attitude towards this fact. "This is the *decisive point*," wrote Strauss,<sup>1</sup> "where the naturalistic opinion must either retract all its previous assertions or in some way explain the faith in the resurrection without appealing to a miracle." Contemporary criticism, apparently made uneasy by it, blames Strauss for this assertion. It is determined to prove that a contingent fact cannot establish a conviction; and it has severed the bonds which tradition and good sense had established between our faith and history. For us, as for the apostles, the question which depends upon the fact of the resurrection is a question of faith, and we proceed to study it with this in view.

<sup>1</sup> *Das Leben Jesu*, 1864, p. 288.

## THE ACCOUNTS

## I

Before approaching the facts we must examine the accounts of them, noting the differences and determining the agreements. The events of the resurrection day are known to us from different sources, the witnesses seem to be at variance, and the apparent contradictions are made the excuse for refusing to credit them even on the points where they agree.

The narratives of the resurrection may be grouped in two series ; on the one hand, we have St. Mark and St. Matthew, whom the author of the *Gospel of Peter* seems to follow ; on the other, St. Luke and St. John. According to the first two synoptists, the risen Jesus does not show Himself in Judæa ; the apparitions with which the apostles were favoured occurred in Galilee exclusively ; they are circumscribed and localised in the northern province by the message which the angel entrusted to the holy women, which was supported by Jesus' order to the disciples on the eve of His death : "Go, tell His disciples and Peter, that He goeth before you into Galilee ; there you shall see Him, as He told you." This message, as we see, reproduces verbally the words of the assignation : "After my resurrection I will go before you into Galilee." In St. John's gospel the first apparitions of Jesus are in Judæa ; beginning with the

very day of the resurrection. St. Luke, who also recounts them, seems to be unaware of, and even to exclude, the departure of the apostles for Galilee. The Saviour would even appear to have given them the order not to quit Jerusalem, "but stay you in the city till you be endued with power from on high."

This is the order of events according to the Galilean accounts. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome came in the morning to embalm the body of the Saviour, and found the tomb empty. An angel told them that Jesus was risen, and charged them to warn the disciples and Peter that they must repair to Galilee. The women ran away, trembling and breathless with fright; they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. St. Mark's narrative closes at this point. The enumeration of apparitions which follows does not belong to the primitive account; it cuts short the development of the events put in motion by the angel's message. This canonical fragment seems to be an appendix, the addition of a different hand, informed from a Judæan source. St. Matthew is in close agreement with St. Mark; the narrative is constructed according to the same plan; all the occurrences point to the assignation in Galilee. The prediction of the apparition is described. Then there is the sudden revelation of Jesus to the holy women when quitting the sepulchre to rejoin the apostles, which is in no way prepared for by preceding events, which having no organic connection with its setting is by many

critics regarded as an interpolation. We said that the *Gospel of Peter* must be classed among the writings of the Galilean tradition. In it the sober narrative of events of our canonical sources has been distorted by legendary invention. It alone describes the very act of resurrection, and how Jesus left the tomb. The characters which figure in it are out of all proportion, and the remarks of the women do not altogether escape the ridiculous. The tomb is found empty and the angel announces the resurrection:<sup>1</sup> "Why have you come here? What do you seek? Is it the crucified? He has risen up and departed."<sup>2</sup> If you do not believe it, look and see the place where He lay; He is there no longer, for He is risen, He has gone back whence He came." Then the affrighted women flee. "It was the last day of unleavened bread, and many were leaving to return to their homes, the feast being at an end. And we, the twelve disciples of the Lord, were weeping and we were afflicted; and every one, saddened by what had come to pass, was returning to his home. And I, Peter, and Andrew my brother, having taken our nets, went down to the sea, and there was with us Levi the son of Alpheus, whom the Lord . . ." In the apocryphal account of Peter the ascension immediately follows the resurrection from the tomb; the risen Jesus, nevertheless, would return upon earth, since the interrupted narrative manifestly led on to an apparition by the shore of Lake Tiberias.

<sup>1</sup> 56.<sup>2</sup> ἀνέστη καὶ ἀπῆλθεν.



The Judæan tradition is represented by St. Luke and St. John, and the supplement to the gospel of St. Mark. Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary the mother of James, St. Luke says, came to the tomb and found it empty. They were astounded. Two angels assured them that Jesus was risen. "Remember," they said, "what He said to you when He was in Galilee." They carried the message to the eleven; but they were not believed; they were even supposed to have gone out of their minds. Peter, however, ran to the tomb; he saw nothing but the winding sheet and wrappings, and he returned, astonished at what had happened. Then a central incident, the journey of the two disciples of Emmaus, supervenes; about this St. Luke has grouped and co-ordinated the different apparitions of Jesus and His last farewells. This arrangement is the outcome of a special literary manner which abstracts entirely from chronology. The two disciples to whom the Saviour made Himself known at Emmaus returned the same evening to Jerusalem; they found the twelve apostles together, and they were greeted with these words: "The Lord is indeed risen, and has appeared to Peter." They, too, then recounted their adventure. At that very moment Jesus appeared to the disciples. They supposed Him to be a ghost. He showed them His hands as a means of identification; and in order to convince those who still hesitated, He ate in their presence. Three apparitions then occurred in Judæa on the day of the resurrection

itself: to Peter, to the disciples at Emmaus, and to the eleven.

The first manifestations of the risen Jesus occurred at Jerusalem according to St. John also. Mary Magdalene, who found the tomb open and empty, informed the apostles of the fact. Peter and John ran to the sepulchre. The disciple whom Jesus loved went down into the chamber; he saw and believed. The others did not yet know the Scripture which said that Christ should rise again. Mary Magdalene, still convinced that the tomb had been violated and the body taken away, complained and wept; she was favoured with an apparition. In the evening Jesus showed Himself to the apostles. A week later Thomas, who had not been present and who remained incredulous, was convinced by the evidence of the wounds. In the chapter following, which seems to form no part of the body of the gospel, which was added, one would say, by disciples of John, we find circumstantiated accounts of the Galilean apparitions.

The opposition between the two traditions appears to be irreducible, and the two accounts seem to be incapable of reconciliation; we are reduced to choosing between them, and the negative criticism gives the preference to St. Mark and St. Matthew, who place the first apparition of Jesus in Galilee. Their narration of supernatural events is more sober, while the simplicity of arrangement in their accounts adds also to their credibility.

## II

The negative criticism even asserts that the testimony of St. Paul would in itself be sufficient to supply a casting vote in favour of the Galilean tradition. The apostle explained only once, in the First Epistle to the Corinthians,<sup>1</sup> whence he had his faith in the resurrection, what were the human guarantees which, in his case, created the unshakable certitude of the reality of that on which rested the truth of the gospel and his hopes as a Christian. That testimony, by its antiquity, by its logical structure, seems to be the proper starting-point for every historical inquiry into the circumstances of the resurrection; in the exegesis of to-day it occupies a central position, for which reason we also are constrained to give it a prominent place:

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received: how that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures. And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the scriptures; and that He was seen by Kephass; and after that by the eleven. Then was He seen by more than five hundred brethren at once: of whom many remain until this present, and some are fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. And last of all He was seen by me, as by one born out of due time.”

<sup>1</sup> xv. 1-8.

St. Paul is careful to characterise and define his teaching: it is a tradition; he received it as such; as such he delivered it to the Corinthians. He brings out prominently his character as a depositary. It is necessary to affix a date to this testimony in order to indicate its precise import, and the occasion which evoked it.

According to Harnack,<sup>1</sup> the Church of Corinth was founded in the year 48. Paul, converted a short time after the death of Jesus, in the year following it even, was immediately convinced of the truth of the resurrection. The victorious certitude which overcame the Pharisee's prejudices, his conservative and systematic hostility towards the victim of Calvary, was Jesus risen. He made inquiry into the events of the third day. He himself has indicated the sources of his gospel, and told us how of his own accord he sought corroboration of his facts.<sup>2</sup> "After three years," he says, referring to the time either of his conversion or of his sojourn in Arabia, "I went to Jerusalem to make the acquaintance of Kephas, and I tarried with him fifteen days. . . . After fourteen years<sup>3</sup> I went up again to Jerusalem. . . . I communicated to them the gospel which I preach among the pagans, particularly to those who were the most thought of, lest I should run, or had run, in vain." The tradition, as we see, goes back to the first years of Christianity. It is the precious inheritance of the community of Jerusalem

<sup>1</sup> *Geschichte der Altchr. litteratur*, ii. 1; *Chronologie des Paulus*, 233-9.

<sup>2</sup> Galatians i. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Galatians ii. 1.

presided over by Peter, James, and John ; and it was from the Mother Church that it was carried into the churches of the Empire.

In order to determine what the tradition contained we must remember that the apostle was assailing certain doubts which disturbed the minds of Christians of Greek culture. Faith in the triumph of Jesus over death was in no way shaken ; it was the dogma of the general resurrection which was called in question, and even rejected. St. Paul, to make it secure, insists upon the essential connection which he saw between the resurrection of the Saviour and that of men. "Now if Christ be preached, that He arose again from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen again." The personal triumph of Christ is the security of our triumph. That is why he wishes to raise faith in the resurrection of Jesus to the condition of unshakable certitude. The apostle begins by repeating the message, which he communicated to the Corinthians when, for the first time, he preached Jesus Christ to them. The message comprised four statements arranged in two pairs :—

Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures ;

He was buried.

He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures.

He was seen by Kephas, and after that by the twelve.

The two apparitions accorded to Peter and to the twelve seem to us distinct from those enumerated in the verses following. That he wished to isolate them is evident from the grammatical structure of his phrasing. The belief of the Christian community in the resurrection of Jesus rested upon those two apparitions. The others did not belong to the substance of his gospel; they appear to be mentioned now for the first time. He includes them, because they support and confirm the two manifestations which for him have an official character. "Then He was seen by more than five hundred brethren at once; of whom many remain until this present. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. And last of all He was seen by me, as by one born out of due time."

Whence had the apostle his faith in the resurrection; that is to say, how did he know that Christ returned to life from the dead? Some critics, who choose to lay special stress on the double mention of the Scriptures, have concluded that the basis of St. Paul's faith in the resurrection was the prophecies, that it was, therefore, a purely scriptural conclusion. We cannot, under any condition, accept this hypothesis, since St. Paul took pains to show that it was here a question of tradition, the tradition which he himself received, which he transmits faithfully. Others limit the influence of scripture to the mention of the third day. Resurrection on the third day, according to them, was a postulate of the Messianic



theology, which accepted and insisted upon the period together with the fact ; and it should therefore be excluded from the tradition to which Paul witnesses. The third day, according to these critics, was derived from a text of Osee :<sup>1</sup> " He will revive us after two days. On the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." Certainly we do not deny the wide and frequent use made of the Scriptures to support the important facts of the life of Jesus, and the constant endeavours of the apostles and evangelists to bring His sayings and miracles into harmony with the Old Testament, and even to model His very person in the mould of the Scriptures. The then apologetic required such biblical support. But there is no authority for saying that the scriptural prophecy fixed the period of the third day. Nowhere is any mention made of that text of Osee ; the fathers know nothing of such connection. Modern critics have brought this text to light for the first time.<sup>2</sup> St. Paul found the third day already provided with its proof. We cannot believe that he could have invented it. The belief in the resurrection on the third day is established upon a fact, and is not the result of a theory. He found it in the tradition along with the other facts of which he speaks.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> vi. 2 ; see also 4 Kings xx. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Loofs, *Die Auferstehungsberichte und ihr Wert*, Leipzig, 1898, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Rohrbach (*Die Berichte über die Auferstehung Jesu Christi*, 1898, p. 4) draws attention to the fact that the most ancient redaction

Thus it is an historical fact, and not a theological conclusion, that Jesus rose again the third day. Paul became aware of this at the time when he received his gospel and compared his preaching with that of St. Peter. The moment has now come to put a more advanced question, which will make clear the positions taken up by the critics, and guide the discussion now to follow. Did St. Paul understand that on the third day Jesus rose and appeared to Peter? or would the apparitions, according to him, be posterior to the resurrection, and would he assign to them a later date? The former interpretation would give the weight of St. Paul's testimony to St. Luke and St. John, while the latter would favour the Galilean tradition, represented, as we saw, by St. Mark and St. Matthew.

The reader is doubtless aware that many critics deny that the tomb was found empty on the morning of the third day. They assert that the apostles, scattered like a flock of which the shepherd had been struck down, fled into Galilee, discouraged and believing that all was over; that having by degrees recovered their self-possession, they came to convince themselves that He was living. Peter thought he saw Him. The Master then was living, con-

of the evangelical prophecies of the resurrection, St. Mark's, places the miraculous event *after three days*, while St. Matthew and St. Luke place it *on the third day*. The latter redaction betrays its preoccupation to secure harmony. The gospel of Mark, which, according to him, is primitive, does not agree with the text of Osee. The prophecy cannot then have inspired the ancient formula *after three days*.

sequently risen from the dead. Had it not been noised among the crowd that John the Baptist himself had risen from the grave? The vision of Kephaz became contagious; the twelve see Him also; troubled by these apparitions, vouchsafed so far to the apostles alone, the disciples began to expect the same favour; five hundred of them saw the Saviour in the splendour of a celestial body. The origin of the belief in the resurrection was not then the account of the women, according to the critics our contemporaries; it is guaranteed, not by the tomb being found open and empty, but by the Galilean apparitions. Paul must be the chief support of this conception of the primitive history. His statement, they say, is more irreconcilable with the evangelical accounts than they are *inter se*. Having set out upon this road, they proceed to explain the nature of the glorious body after the nature of the apparitions. These were purely spiritual. It was Christ at the right hand of the Father, alive with supraterrrestrial life, who revealed Himself to them. The reanimation of the entombed body would have been an obstacle to that new state. The corpse, therefore, remained in the grave, whether the tomb was found empty, as the gospels would have us believe, or whether it remained sealed.

We see the importance which the modern rationalistic school attaches to the question: Does Paul bear witness that Christ appeared the third day? The critics adopt the negative solution, classing the

apostle of the Gentiles among the supporters of the Galilean tradition, which places the visions at a distant date. The distance separating Jerusalem from the northern province requires a hurried walk of three or four days. They point out that the Christian message is divided into four statements: Jesus dies; He is buried; He rises the third day; He appears to Peter, then to the twelve. From this disjuncture they assume the right to separate the appearances from the fact of the resurrection, and to think that the apostle places them beyond the third day.

It is merely guessing at a solution to attempt to deduce it from a purely grammatical construction necessitated by the introduction of a new fact. Should we not then also conclude from the disjuncture that the burial of Jesus took place on a day other than that of His death. Again, the formula, "He rose again the third day," is undoubtedly ancient; the period is linked inseparably with the fact of the resurrection in the different evangelical traditions; it never was associated with the apparitions of Jesus. Besides, we cannot possibly doubt the dependence of St. Luke upon St. Paul; the evangelical catechesis of the apostle was reproduced by his disciple. It would be quite arbitrary, we think, to deny it, in respect of this most important occurrence of the life of Jesus upon which St. Paul was specially well-informed. And when we observe that, according to St. Luke, Peter was favoured with the first per-

sonal and independent vision; and that this evangelist emphasises the fact, giving it a place of incontestable prominence, while in the accounts of St. Matthew and St. Mark no mention is made of it, is it not wiser to classify St. Paul among the witnesses of the Judæan apparitions than at the cost of violent exegesis to associate him with the two first evangelists? Christ rose again and appeared; the proof following the fact and supporting it; that is the substance of the gospel which the apostle recalls to the mind of the Church at Corinth.

In order to give unshakable certitude to the resurrection, St. Paul enumerates six apparitions, which he divides into two groups. Those with which the twelve were favoured form one of these groups, and are distinguished from the others, either because they formed part of the gospel which he had already preached—they constituted by themselves a testimony which none disputed—or because these two apparitions had occurred on the day of the resurrection, and so carried the date of the third day. In the Epistle to the Corinthians he reinforces the two visions of Peter and the twelve by four others, to which he gives very great credit; afterwards he was seen by five hundred disciples; then by James, after that by all the apostles; and last of all by me, Paul. Schmiedel,<sup>1</sup> in analysing this chapter, declares that the apostle not only knows nothing of the apparitions he does not mention, but that by his turn of

<sup>1</sup> *Handcommentar*. Zweiter Band, p. 188.

phrase he excludes them. As they stand they constitute a series where each has its number and date, and it is impossible to break the chain in order to introduce the apparitions to the holy women and the disciples at Emmaus.

It is evident that the apparitions are enumerated in chronological order; although the apostle does not state in so many words that the vision with which Peter was favoured was the first, yet we conclude that he wishes this to be understood from his marking the following apparitions with the temporal particles "afterwards," "last of all," *εἶτα ἔπειτα ἐσχάτως*. But St. Paul only speaks of the visions accorded to the official witnesses chosen by God, and this title was reserved to the apostles alone:<sup>1</sup> "Him (Jesus) God raised up the third day, and gave Him to be made manifest, not to all the people, but *to witnesses preordained* by God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He arose again from the dead." The apologetic purpose of St. Paul's account is manifest; namely, to promote belief in the resurrection of the Saviour and create certitude which nothing can disturb. How, indeed, could faith be refused when the witnesses of the resurrection were the pillars of the Church, Peter, and then the twelve; then there were the five hundred disciples, of whom the greater number were still alive and could be questioned; there was James, the head of the Church

<sup>1</sup> Acts x. 40. *καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτὸν ἐμφανῆ γενέσθαι οὐ παντὶ τῇ λαῷ ἀλλὰ μάρτυσιν τοῖς προκεχειροτονημένοις ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ.*



of Jerusalem; then there were the apostles all together, and finally Paul, the last called, whose vocation originated with the sight of Jesus. Paul then only mentions the apparitions accorded to those officially designated as witnesses. That is why he does not include the vision of the two disciples at Emmaus.

As he said nothing about the tomb being found empty, so he makes no mention of the facts connected with that discovery. As to the visions seen by the Galilean women, they would not have enjoyed especial credit at Corinth. From the moment when Jerusalem became the centre of Christian activity those pious followers of Jesus were forgotten. They returned to their humble sphere and disappeared from history.

These, then, are the essential data which the analysis of the testimony of St. Paul has brought to light. The apostle received an evangelical message; he repeated what was known in official circles at Jerusalem in the first days of Christianity. He was only an instrument; all he knew was that he was transmitting a tradition without interpreting or modifying it. The events he described were not the outcome of theological construction, they did not depend upon the comparison of texts; he gathered them in the course of careful inquiry, retracing the evangelical stream to its source. The idea had not created the fact, for his faith in Jesus the Messiah was not anterior to his certitude of the resurrection.

For him, as for all the apostles, Jesus was demonstrated the Christ, the Son of God, by His triumph on the resurrection day. The prophetic aspect of death for sin, of resurrection the third day, has no other than an apologetic interest. Paul, and the apostles he consulted, attached these two supreme Christian facts to their scriptural supports, and by so doing procured for them credit and authority almost without limit. He did not speak of the empty tomb; he did not judge that fact of itself to be convincing; but indirectly he testified to it also, as we shall show presently. The series of apparitions accorded to the official witnesses was stronger proof that Christ was alive. We cannot oppose negation to witnesses who have seen with their eyes. Finally, if we appeal to St. Paul to give the casting vote among the evangelical authorities as to the place and time of the apparitions, we think we have demonstrated that he pronounces in favour of the Judæan tradition represented by St. Luke his disciple, and developed by St. John.

### III

But the four evangelical accounts are still unreconciled, and their disagreement is more pronounced than ever. The great lines of construction drawn by their authors cannot be adapted one to another. In the presence of the discord, should the historian hesitate to draw his conclusion, ought he

not bodily to reject their story, and nonsuit all these writers, who have not even tried to agree as to this capital article of their faith? May he not close the life of Jesus with the burial, declaring the last act to have been the rolling of the stone, fixed in its stone socket by the official seal? Such is the question of the critic, who is discouraged by the hopelessly contradictory accounts. Of all the events which occurred on the third day around the empty tomb, not one is worthy of credence. Certain mysterious apparitions in Galilee alone flash on the dark night of the origins of Christianity. They furnish the sole fact upon which the historian can take hold, in order to explain the faith in the resurrection. We must therefore return to the evangelical accounts, and endeavour by some means to explain their divergencies.

St. Mark's account is held to be the most ancient ; our inquiry, therefore, shall begin with it. The simple, primitive narrative, from which we must detach the supplementary portion, is this : The tomb was found empty by women ; an angel informed them that Jesus was risen and gave His disciples a rendezvous in Galilee. "But they going out fled from the sepulchre, for a trembling and fear had seized them ; and they said nothing to any man, for they were afraid." The gospel closes with this picture of trembling and affrighted Galilean women. St. Mark does not say whether the women carried the message, nor whether Jesus actually appeared

to His disciples. His account appears so incomplete that many critics have thought that it has come down to us mutilated, whether by such an accident as the detachment of a last leaf, or by the wilful substitution of the actual conclusion for the primitive conclusion. To us this hypothesis seems gratuitous. It is beyond question that the apparitions of Jesus do not belong to His terrestrial life, to His activity as a preacher, to His rôle as the founder of the kingdom of God. We know that what St. Mark wished to establish was that Jesus manifested Himself as the Messiah of God by His words, His works, and His life. The Son of man had to suffer much, to die, and to rise again. The evangelist has recounted the sufferings and the death ; he closes his narrative with the resurrection, announced to the women by the angel. He who, to all appearance, was overcome, rose and lived again ; that is the last word. It is then the dawn of a new life in a new world which he reveals in its splendour. He leaves his readers with their eyes turned towards the eastern horizon ; his task is fulfilled.

On the other hand, every attentive reader observes that St. Luke, St. John, and St. Paul elaborate the subject of the apparitions, enumerating them with confidence, in order to apologetic ends. He rose again, since He was seen, St. Paul declares ; St. Luke would establish that He *really* rose. It is certainly the same Jesus, since He was touched, since He ate, since the stigmata were examined. Now, this in-

tention of proving and demonstrating the triumph of the Saviour does not appear in St. Mark and St. Matthew. At the time when they wrote no one doubted it. They may, therefore, have known of all the apparitions, and yet have passed them over in silence, as not coming within the scope of their narration. Or they could have made a free selection, according to the requirements of a preconcerted plan; this privilege seems to us to have been made use of in the case of the Galilean apparition recounted by the first evangelist.

The Jewish calumny of the surreptitious removal of the body by the disciples occupies a central position in St. Matthew's account. It is introduced between the message brought by the women and the apparition to the disciples upon the mountain. The author has introduced it apparently because it was in harmony with his purpose, which was to demonstrate how it was that the Jews, in spite of the tomb being found empty, refused to believe in Jesus. He wished to record the obstinacy of the religious and political chiefs, who, in the presence of an incontrovertible fact, endeavoured to destroy it by one last lie; and the gravity of their fault, which deprived them of salvation and drew upon them the wrath of God. The events of the Resurrection morning are put forth simply and shortly; believing readers do not ask for proofs. The apparition in Galilee is outside his undertaking as the historian of Jesus; evidently it is not introduced for its own sake, but

because on this occasion Jesus gave to His apostles the order to preach the gospel to the nations. The rejection of salvation by the Jews and its passing to the Pagans is one of the constant preoccupations of St. Matthew. We are not, therefore, entitled to require of the two evangelists detailed accounts of every event and a numerical list of the apparitions, since they never undertook to describe them.

It remains to explain the message entrusted to the women. It is formulated in such a manner, the critics say, as to preclude any apparition in Judæa. It would contradict the accounts of St. Luke and St. John, and condemn them as overloaded with apocryphal and legendary details. If we had only, that is to say, the two first gospels, we should have to conclude that the Saviour did not wish to reveal Himself in Jerusalem; the formula is precise, and it does not seem capable of being shaken. We think that the evangelists did not compose the formula, but that they must have received it as it is. It may possibly have formed part of a special catechesis; and we must assume that the saying of Jesus to His disciples "After I shall have risen from the dead I will go before you into Galilee" was the essential element in its formation. Taken by itself, that prophecy did not signify that Jesus proposed not to manifest Himself in Judæa; the Saviour wished to say that in Galilee He would collect again the dispersed flock, that He would make a prolonged sojourn with His disciples, and that, in



liberty and security, He would then give them His last instructions. Revived and retold by tradition, it acquired in the process the absolute form which the evangelists have preserved. St. Matthew reproduced it, because he wished to furnish the Galilean apparition with an interest of vital importance to his thesis. St. Mark does not say how he understood it, or how it was interpreted, since he is silent upon the delivery of the message, upon the departure for Galilee, and upon the apparitions. Would it be rash to affirm that the words of the holy women had not sufficient weight to excite faith in the resurrection and determine the departure of the apostles towards the northern province, since, according to all the evangelists, their report was received with incredulity, and, according to St. Matthew himself, some of the disciples refused to believe, even after having seen Jesus?

But it is more than time for us to discontinue this attempt at harmony. The results attained by those who have wished to pursue it further do not encourage us to follow their example. Their solutions are not only constrained and violent, but contradictory as well. They have dismembered and disfigured the simple narratives; such agreements as they have arrived at are cumbrous; and they have substituted mathematical tabulation of the events for the literary forms and personal impressions of each author. Are we bound, after all, to demand identical accounts from historians who were unequally informed, who

had no intention of recounting everything, and who, moved to write by different motives, distributed the events in different order? We conclude this inquiry by pointing out that the difficulties of harmonisation presented by the different accounts of the resurrection are not greater than those which we find on almost every page of the gospels. The apparent disagreement is moreover a security. Disingenuous witnesses would have taken the trouble to compose a narrative, the elements of which had been harmoniously moulded and ordered.

Before concluding this part of the chapter, it remains to compose from the accounts an approximate statement of the events, and to indicate the order in which, apparently, they occurred.

The canonical gospels teach us nothing as to the fact itself of the resurrection, by what way or under what influences life was restored to the bloodless corpse of the crucified. All beginnings, all generations, whether in nature or in history, are sealed to research; and thus it is here in the mysterious transformation from the dead body to the glorious body.

What was the state of mind of the holy women and the apostles on the day of the resurrection? What were they waiting for? Not one of them foresaw the resurrection. Certainly the women had no such hope, when they brought spices to the tomb to embalm the body of the prophet, to preserve it from corruption. And when they carried the news to the apostles, their testimony was received with

incredulity and irony ; they were supposed to be demented. Among the disciples themselves we find doubt, thoughtful hesitation, and plain refusal to believe. It is only by degrees and after repeated apparitions that the apostles were convinced.

The first apparitions, according to St. Luke and St. John, were in Judæa. The very day of the resurrection Jesus manifested Himself to the women, to the disciples at Emmaus, to Peter, and to the eleven. The day itself would settle, if need were, the question of place. It is not possible to bend these accounts into conformity with the sense of the Galilean tradition. This tradition, represented by St. Mark and St. Matthew, is far from being so solid and unimpeachable.

The apparitions at Jerusalem and in Judæa have every verisimilitude on their side ; they are required by the historical situation as it is derived from the four accounts as a whole. According to the two first evangelists themselves, the apostles were at Jerusalem on the day of the resurrection. The women were sent to them to announce the triumph of Jesus, who reminds them of the rendezvous which He had fixed beforehand, and orders them to go into Galilee.

## THE EVENTS

Those critics who have suppressed from the gospel narrative the marvellous incidents, the messages of the angels, and all that side of it which borders on the divine world, and by so doing have reduced it to an ordinary page of human history, have to seek for the causes which determined the faith of the apostles in the resurrection. The greater number<sup>1</sup> take a personal theory for their starting-point; they are never tired of attributing to the first disciples Messianic hopes based upon this first postulate: If Jesus is the Messiah the tomb cannot hold Him. The resurrection was required by this faith, which even the dreadful death could not disturb for very long. The belief in the resurrection, according to this theory, would depend upon the faith in the Messiah. This origin of the apostles' belief seems to us shaken by the logic of the facts. The poor Galileans described to us by the gospels do not appear to be moved in the least by texts from the Old Testament. Their faith was not built upon the prophecies, and the prophecies would have lost all significance with the final disaster. The story of the Messiah in the glittering heaven of Daniel's visions, which Jesus had half revealed, which His words had made dazzling, had ceased to be true; the book was

<sup>1</sup> Holtzmann, *N. Th.*, i., pp. 303 and 356.

closed and forgotten. For them Jesus, dead and buried, ceased to be the Christ of God; their faith had collapsed. It was the resurrection that revived it, demonstrating to them that the prophet was the Messiah: "let all the house of Israel know most certainly that God had made both *Lord and Christ*, this same Jesus whom you have crucified."<sup>1</sup>

Belief in the victory over death did not proceed from an anterior faith; facts alone produced it; it was accredited and propagated by facts. It was not until later that prophecy was appealed to for support. Among all the facts there are two which are essential, which require to be singled out for severe examination: the tomb was found empty; the apostles believed that they saw their Master resuscitated.

## I

What happened at the tomb of the Saviour on the morning of the third day? In what state was the sepulchre when the holy women came to it? Had the body been taken away? These questions are answered by all four evangelists in the same way, in spite of discrepancies of secondary detail; one would expect the accounts, therefore, to be safe from discussion, and that the question would present itself to every historian as a problem to solve. There are, however, critics who ignore it, who decide, on the

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 36. ὅτι καὶ κύριον αὐτὸν καὶ Χριστὸν ἐποίησεν ὁ Θεός.

ground of St. Paul's silence, to deny the antiquity, and, consequently, the authenticity, of the accounts. The primitive tradition is reflected, according to them, in the official communication addressed by St. Paul to the Corinthians. There alone it is preserved, pure, undistorted, unexaggerated. But that communication is absolutely silent as to the events which occurred at the tomb; the women who, in the gospels, play the chief part do not appear at all; not a shadow of Galilean women or even of Mary of Magdala appears in St. Paul's broadly drawn picture; facts as important as the empty tomb, the angelic message announcing to the world that the Master had overcome death, could not have been omitted from a critical account, the object of which was demonstration, and the formation of a firm conviction. As he has not reproduced these facts, we may take for granted that he was not acquainted with them; the tradition which was his authority cannot have contained them; Peter, James, and John knew nothing of them. The story of the tomb found empty on the morning of the third day would belong to legend; it was incorporated with the primitive tradition to serve as an introduction and framework to the genuine apparitions. The problem does not exist for these critics, and, according to them, it is vain to propose it. Such seems to us the position taken up by Weizsäcker<sup>1</sup> in the first chapter of his

<sup>1</sup> *Das apostolische Zeitalter*, p. 6 *et seq.* Trans. J. Millar, 1895 (*The Apostolic Age of the Church*).



work on the apostolic times. His vigorous thesis is regarded as conclusive in the different schools of German exegesis.

In order to forestall serious difficulties, they add to their theory an exhaustive historical hypothesis. The apostles, according to them, left Jerusalem discouraged and incredulous, and returned to Galilee. There were extraordinary visions, and owing to these, belief in the resurrection gradually germinated; a group of believers was formed. After some time they decided to return to Jerusalem. In the holy city the little community lived quietly and unobtrusively, as a sect which wished to be overlooked, which had no desire to make over to the public the blessed secret upon which its faith was founded. This secret was whispered into the ear, not preached upon the house-tops. The city knew nothing of it; the Sanhedrin did not find it out, nor was its vigilance aroused by it. Faith in the resurrection did not become public till long afterwards, under the action of causes we do not know. The slow, mysterious progress of the belief is the explanation of its escape from the notice of the religious authorities, who were thus not in a position to cast doubt upon it or destroy it effectively.

The question, however, has not been finally disposed of; it calls for a new examination and full solution, and it is the grave of Jesus which reopens it. For we cannot conceive how the apostles' faith in the resuscitated Christ, a faith dependent upon apparitions,

is to be reconciled with the actual sealed tomb where the Master's body sleeps, or why the apostles should never have gone to the garden of Joseph of Arimathea, or why they omitted to verify the state of the tomb, as they were in every way bound to do. And we ask ourselves how far their sincerity could withstand questions of this kind. The sealed tomb containing the body of Jesus, in the field close to Golgotha, was at the gate of Jerusalem, where streams of people were continually passing and repassing; would this not have given the lie grimly to the story of the resurrection? Brought into prominence by the tragedy in which all the city bore part, it would be the irrefragable witness of the discomfiture of the prophet, the rock of offence. And against that rock the faith of the apostles would have had to do battle; and not only their faith, but the faith of the disciples, of the Church entire, grouped and founded on the message: Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead. If the disciples had neglected the evidence of the tomb itself, one cannot express with what joy the enemies of Jesus would have addressed themselves to the task of verification, in order to be able to laugh at the simplicity of the credulous Galileans, to inflict upon them a denial to which there would be no retort. It seems to us, therefore, impossible to reconcile the inward, secret faith of the apostles and of the Christian community with the unviolated tomb. The public preaching of the resurrection was even less reconcilable with the burial of the body and its

continuance in the tomb. We see why the critics defer that publicity; but the motives they adduce contradict history and verisimilitude. We cannot understand how the apostles, having acquired the unshakable conviction that their Master was resuscitated, through single and collective visions, should hide themselves in timid and affrighted silence. That conviction transformed their lives; it imposed upon them the great duty of announcing to the world that Jesus is the Saviour sent by God; can we imagine that, having come into the heart of the theocracy to make this announcement, they should have shirked their task? How far more likely is the historical situation described in the book of the Acts. The form of St. Peter's discourses may be doubtful, but there is no reason for suspecting the accuracy of the dates assigned to them.

Something then occurred at the tomb of Jesus in the second night following the burial. According to the best-attested historical account, on the morning of the third day the Galilean women repaired to the tomb to embalm the body of the prophet. They saw that the heavy stone had been rolled away. Entering into the mortuary excavation, they found that the body had disappeared; they were informed in a mysterious manner that the Master had been awakened from His sleep and resuscitated. These are the facts which the evangelists with one accord reproduce.

St. Matthew alludes to a calumny spread by the

Jewish authorities on the subject of the body. It must be ancient ; it bears witness to the embarrassment of the Sanhedrists who, not knowing how to account for the disappearance of the body of Jesus, had it said that His disciples had removed it. The first evangelist has preserved a real polemical dispute ; Rohrbach expresses it happily in a dialogue which he supposes between a Christian and a Jew.

Christian : The Christ has risen from the dead.  
Proof : the tomb was found open and empty.

Jew : It was the disciples who took away the corpse.

Christian : Impossible ; for the Roman guard was stationed in the vicinity to watch it.

Jew : The soldiers were asleep.

Christian : The chief priests paid the soldiers to circulate that calumny.

One conclusion is evident, that the Jews showed themselves to be uneasy and preoccupied on the subject of the tomb. They were not in a position to deny that it was found empty, the body having disappeared. In their embarrassment they had nothing to reply but that the disciples were the authors of its disappearance and concealment. "And this was spread abroad among the Jews even unto this day."<sup>1</sup>

The historian of the origin of Christianity is confronted with an open tomb and the body gone. Can he neglect the question : Who opened the tomb ;

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xxviii. 15.

who took away the body? Can he refuse to understand that here is a problem demanding solution? The old critics were not afraid to stoop in order to peer into the sepulchral cavity where the body once lay. Having examined it, they proposed three hypotheses, which we think it is our duty to reproduce.

We will not go into the solution proposed by the author of the fragments of Wolfenbüttel. According to that celebrated rationalistic manifesto, the disciples themselves removed the body of Jesus to induce the belief that He had been resuscitated. Strauss it was<sup>1</sup> who attacked this explanation most vigorously; he destroyed it for ever, to such a degree that since his onslaught no one has dared take it up again. "In that case," the critic declares, "religion would be a fiction dictated by personal interest. . . . But this point of view is so universally superseded that it is stupid to be forced to rebut it." It is impossible that the apostles could have been guilty of a fraud. Some decisive fact, indisputably evident, produced in them the conviction that their Master was risen from the dead. All the evangelical accounts represent them as incredulous; they doubted when the women returned from the tomb; they still doubted and were anxious when they were themselves at the tomb; they doubted even when Jesus appeared. Their life was transformed by a certitude which imposed serious duties upon them. Faith in the risen Jesus was the all-powerful cause which created them

<sup>1</sup> *Streitschriften*, Part 3, p. 41.

apostles and preachers of the kingdom of God throughout the world. Its effect upon themselves was stronger than the discourses, the miracles, and the visible presence of Jesus. Can we suggest imposture as the basis and generative element of that faith? Can we deny their sincerity?

Paulus has proposed another hypothesis, which Hase has accepted. When Jesus was taken down from the cross He was only swooning and numb, death had not yet occurred. Being placed in the sepulchre He gradually returned to life, the recovery being due to the coolness of the grotto which stayed the hæmorrhage, and especially to the strong aromatics with which He was embalmed. Having recovered from His lethargy, He came out of the cavity and rejoined His followers, who interpreted this return to natural life as a resurrection. Strauss has shattered this hypothesis as completely as the former. "Would a man, half-dead, dragging himself from the mortuary cell, so weak as to require medical treatment and an infinity of care, who finally, in spite of all, succumbs to his sufferings, would he have produced on them the impression of the prince of life, the vanquisher of the tomb?"<sup>1</sup> Godet remarks that this explanation goes back inevitably to the hypothesis of fraud. "Further, it leads us to make Jesus Himself an accomplice of the imposture. For how could He have done nothing to undeceive His disciples, who persuaded themselves that He was

<sup>1</sup> *A New Life of Jesus for the German People.*



really resuscitated. And what would have become of Him at the end of this melancholy convalescence? He went away to die in an Essene convent, according to one scholar, according to another, in an inn in Phœnicia, whither He went to gain adherents among the rustic pagans, all the time concealing His lamentable end from His apostles in a manner therefore voluntarily to leave them in their error." We may judge from these extravagant hypotheses how great is the embarrassment of the critic when he faces this difficult problem and forces himself to solve it. He is obliged to have recourse to the absurd if he will not accept the supernatural.

And so we come to the third solution: that it was the Jews who carried away the body and were responsible for its disappearance. It rallies to-day the adherence of those rationalistic exegetists who do not wish to avoid the question of the empty tomb. It has been defended lately by Albert Réville, who has given it its most acceptable form.<sup>1</sup> We may be permitted to quote his words: "The rumour spread abroad among the Jews that it was the disciples of the Nazarene who had taken away the body of their Master by night, by its evident falsity fully authorises the suspicion that the authors of the deed are much rather to be sought among the accusers."

"In this particular case we should resort to the legal maxim, *Is fecit cui prodest*. It was the chiefs of the Sanhedrin who thought out the abstracting of the

<sup>1</sup> *Jésus de Nazareth*, ii. p. 461 *et seq.*

body, the consequence of which they were very far from foreseeing, but which for the moment took, in their eyes, the shape of a measure of prudence. The weeping Magdalen spoke the simple truth when she cried in tears : ' They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.' Despite all the precautions taken, a vague rumour transpired. Christians got hold of it and interpreted it, clumsily enough indeed, agreeable with their belief, and to refute the accusation brought by the Jews. But the removal must have had the Jews for authors. Here and there we gather indications which turn suspicion in the direction of the Jews rather than any other. We noticed earlier that fragment of the gospel of the Hebrews in which it is said that Jesus, before leaving the tomb, hands His winding-sheet to a slave of the high priest. What business had this slave there ? Another point : it seems from one of the accounts of the fourth gospel that the field adjoining the tomb was cultivated ; a necessary supposition in this fragment, from the illusion of Mary Magdalen, who mistakes Jesus for the gardener of the place. But it must be observed that there was another Jewish version of the removal of the body of Jesus, and that in that version it was not the disciples who were accused. There is a trace of it at the end of Tertullian's tract *De spectaculis*. In a peroration of extreme virulence, the impetuous African, who does not allow Christians to frequent the shows, promises them ample compensations in the future when from the benches of

the celestial amphitheatre they watch the contortions of the pagans and Jews struggling in the flames of hell. Then they will be able to address those who outraged and crucified the Christ, pointing to Him clothed with glory and majesty. 'There,' they will be able to say, 'there is He whose body the disciples stole away, to pretend that He was risen from the dead, there is He whose body the gardener carried off, for fear lest the crowds going and coming *might trample his lettuces!*'"

"Such, then, is the conjecture which we presume to propose after eliminating the other hypotheses which do not appear to us acceptable. The body was taken away by the Jews, who acted in such a way that it could not be known afterwards what had become of it. We do not offer it as though it were capable of vigorous demonstration. It has at least the advantage that it fits in easily with the known facts."

According to M. Réville, the chiefs of the Sanhedrin were those who conceived the carrying away of the body of Jesus, and they proceeded so adroitly that no one has ever known since what became of it.

Data for a serious reply have been indicated here and there in the course of this study. The disciples cannot be accused as the authors of the disappearance of the body of Jesus. The public preaching of the resurrection is inexplicable if the Jews took away the body and hid it. It is beyond dispute that the Saviour's victory over death was solemnly proclaimed

within a very few weeks of the third day. Not only the people, who may have been in ignorance of what their leaders had done, but the Sanhedrists themselves received the news. One fact especially deserves our attention. The book of the Acts states that Peter and John were imprisoned for having preached in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.<sup>1</sup>

“On the morrow the princes and ancients and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; and Annas the high priest, and Caiphas and John and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest. And setting them in the midst they asked: By what power, or by what means, have you done this? By the name of our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God hath raised from the dead, even by Him this man standeth here before you whole.” Does one imagine that in the face of this solemn preaching of the resurrection of the man whom they had tried to destroy by crucifying Him, those malignant, sarcastic magistrates, if they had had anything to do with the removal of the body, would have remained silent and inactive? The circumstantial evidence was in their possession; with a gesture they could have annihilated the new faith, the progress of which was alarming them; and having killed the prophet, with one word they could have destroyed His work for ever. If the Sanhedrists sat silent, if they did not produce that withering contradiction, it was because they were not in a

<sup>1</sup> iv. 5 ss.

position to do so. Unknown to them the tomb had been opened ; unknown to them the sepulchre had been despoiled. On the other hand, it appears from the text of St. Matthew that the Jews were far from indifferent on the subject of the tomb. They knew that they had not contributed to the theft, and they charged the disciples of the Nazarene with having committed it. The writer of the first gospel represents this accusation as current when he wrote. The friends of the Saviour stand absolved of having taken away the body ; His enemies cannot say how it was removed. What became of it, then, if it was not restored to life, if it did not rise from the grave ?

## II

We conclude with a short account of the problem of the apparitions. It will be remembered how we endeavoured to establish that the first apparitions were in Judæa. The departure of the apostles for Galilee, we said, was not instigated by the message of the women. They did not set out to keep the assignation in the northern province until after they had believed. The elements from which that faith was generated were facts, and amongst the facts we must include a visit to the tomb which was found empty. This verification could not of itself convince the apostles of the resurrection of the Master ; the hypothesis of His body having been removed

presented itself as possible, even probable, since the custody of the tomb had been entrusted to the Jews ; moreover, their hopes of final triumph, according to all the gospel accounts, seem to have been extinguished. The apostles were brought to believe, if we may so speak, constrained to believe, by a new fact. That fact can only be the apparitions. It was in consequence of those decisive manifestations at Jerusalem that the convinced apostles repaired to the place appointed in Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus gave them the solemn mission to carry the gospel to the whole world.

According to the critics, the apostles, after waiting in vain at Jerusalem, left for the northern province. They believed that all was over ; the enchanted dream of the restoration of Israel faded away in the disaster of Calvary. They resumed their former occupations ; they untied their boats, and tried to forget their simple illusion as they returned to their fishing. But the past could not be effaced in the countryside in which the Master had lived with them for three years. The little ridge from which He had pronounced the beatitudes to the assembled crowds, the lake on which they had so often carried Him in their skiffs, the coves and bays they had visited in His company, the boat in which He had sat, in which He had slept, everything recalled His memory. They recalled certain of His words which were promises ; they persuaded themselves that He was alive, that the tomb could no longer detain the just. Peter



thought that he saw Him ; the other apostles wished to see Him and saw Him. Visions are contagious ; before many days were over all the disciples had seen Him. Such must have been the origin of the Galilean apparitions and the belief in the resurrection.

Those apparitions were only hallucinations ; they are told in the gospels with vulgarly realistic circumstances. Jesus allowed Himself to be touched ; they saw the stigmata of His passion, and He even eats fish and honey. Legend, the critics conclude, has taken hold of purely subjective facts, which it has exaggerated and distorted ; it gave them that stamp which St. Luke and the author of the fourth gospel have fixed, evidently with an apologetic end in view. The business of the historian is to clarify them, and for that purpose we should return to the source and inquire of St. Paul, who is nearest to it, who had his information from Peter and James and John, and knew the truth concerning the primitive facts. St. Paul puts himself forward as an official witness of the resurrection ; he also was favoured with an apparition ; it is his title to rank among the apostles. He likens his apparition in all respects to those he has just enumerated. We have thus a safe starting-point from which to inquire into the mysterious occurrences to which the apostles were indebted for their faith.

Now, continue the critics, St. Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians,<sup>1</sup> which he wrote at the outset of his

<sup>1</sup> i. 15.

ministry, refers to his vision of Jesus. "When it pleased Him, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by His grace, to reveal His son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, immediately I condescended not to flesh and blood." That manifestation of Jesus was only interior, of a nature entirely spiritual; God has revealed in him His Son. The vision which was accorded to him on the road to Damascus neither proposes nor requires an objective terminus outside himself; it excludes a real apparition. The visions of the apostles are therefore of the same character. To them also, and in the same manner, God revealed His Son.

We concede that St. Paul describes to the Galatians the spiritual aspect of his conversion, and the interior revelation with which he was then favoured, by means of which the obstinate Pharisee and convinced adversary of Jesus of Nazareth was brought to recognise Him as the Messiah and the Son of God. But he does not deny the concrete, exterior, and positive fact which produced that faith, which fact, beyond all question, was the apparition of Jesus Himself. In the epistle he wishes to bring out his apostolic quality, his special mission to the pagans, the divine origin of his gospel; and he proves his right to walk abreast of Peter and the twelve because, like them, he received the summons of the Saviour. That summons was made known to him on the road to Damascus; he also had seen Jesus. "Am not I an apostle?" he writes later to the

Corinthians.<sup>1</sup> "Have not I seen Christ Jesus?" Some critics, even among the more advanced, observe that the psychological explanations of the conversion of St. Paul (we do not speak of the naturalistic solutions such as an epileptic stroke, a sunstroke) are insufficient. An exterior apparition, which for him was light and living force, which in an instant transformed him, that is the fact of which St. Paul is aware; strong in that knowledge, in the certitude that he has seen and heard the living Christ, not only is he gained to the Christian faith, but in one stride he attains to the chosen group of the apostles, he associates himself with the select few, and takes his place unchallenged among the official witnesses of the resurrection.

St. Paul, then, believed in the reality of that apparition, which was unique in his experience. It was distinct in his mind from the ecstasy which occurred five years later. Never does he confuse the manifestation on the road to Damascus with the visions with which he was favoured, with the charismata given to him in common with other Christians. That brought him directly to Jesus as to its cause; the visions and the gifts are the work of the Holy Spirit. The Christ showed Himself to him once only, and that was the last time He appeared; that apparition closes the list. "Last of all and after all the others, the Christ appeared to me also, as to the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 1.

one born out of due time." The risen Christ never reappeared.

If the nature of the apparitions of which the twelve apostles, then the five hundred disciples, were witnesses, is to be explained by that of St. Paul, we must conclude that they were real, positive, and exterior. His certitude of having seen a living being compels us to think that the Galileans also were conscious of having had several times before their eyes the living Saviour in His resuscitated body.

It is indeed the body of Jesus placed in the tomb on the evening of His death which was awakened and restored to life. St. Paul's belief on this subject is firm; he gives it a clearness which admits no doubt. The Christ, alive as a spirit beside God, did not appear in a borrowed body of spiritual essence. The bloody corpse was reanimated on the floor of the mortuary cave; it underwent a transformation, mysterious like all the phenomena of life, which transformation released it from the conditions of matter. It is in that body that Jesus showed Himself and was seen. And thus one day we shall rise from the dead: "But now the Christ is risen from among the dead; He is the first fruit of those that are dead."

St. Paul, as we remarked at the beginning of this chapter, in the different surroundings in which he preached, Jewish or Hellenic, gave only one historical argument for his faith: Jesus Christ rose from the dead. This testimony reaches us across eighteen

centuries. Has the modern apologist the right to reject it as decrepit and let it fall? We think he has not.

We owe to our readers, whom we would wish to spare a misunderstanding, one last explanation upon the value of the resurrection and the part it played in the origin of the Christian faith. Harnack,<sup>1</sup> in an important and well-considered note, points out a frequent parallogism in Christian apologetics. It is often said, he observes, that Christianity rests upon the faith in the resurrection. When that affirmation is completed, as not rarely happens, by the further affirmation that the resurrection is the most certain fact in the history of the world, one does not know but one should be more surprised at the foolishness of such reasoning than at the existing unbelief which it combats.

The learned critic rightly distinguishes the historical question from the question of faith. He gathers the historical facts from documents which he does not well understand. His analysis of the testimony of St. Paul is notoriously insufficient and erroneous. Then he concludes that the theologian who regards the resurrection as the reanimation of the corpse of Jesus separates himself from the primitive tradition, and that the question whether Jesus rose again does not exist for him who abstracts from the purport and value of the person of Jesus: “. . . überhaupt

<sup>1</sup> *Dogmengeschichte*, p. 74.

die Frage, ob Jesus auferstanden ist, für Niemand existieren kann, der von dem Inhalte und Werth der Person Jesu absieht."

We shall never be able to think, like Harnack and the whole modern critical school, that the resurrection is only a contingent form in which the apostles and the Church have in a way incarnated their faith in the after-life of Jesus, a material translation of their hope in His final triumph over death. For the Christian of to-day, they say, it is out of date, and should be suffered to drop, since existence in the world to come is explained by the immortality of the soul, and does not require the reanimation of the body. Doubtless, the certitude that Jesus lives glorified, beside God, as "Lord," is fundamental. The mode of that permanence in being is secondary. But that certitude is linked to an historic fact, being torn from which it vanishes. The symbolism into which those believers, idealists beyond reason, fling themselves is nothing but illusion. Nothing subsists at the base of their faith.

We concede to Harnack that those theologians reason superficially for whom Christianity rests on faith in the resurrection. The apologist who would bring an unprepared mind to the tomb of Jesus would be inexperienced, naïve. The first proceeding of him who is invited to believe should be, it seems to us, to come in contact with Jesus Christ Himself, to study His teaching, to examine the value of the testimony which this Man gave of Himself, touching



His divine origin. He will follow that life to its term, and he will at length find himself at the dawn of the resurrection day. Then only will meditation at the mouth of the empty tomb be fruitful. Holding in his hand Christ's prophecy of His final triumph, like the apostle, he will see and believe. He will verify an historic reality, He will believe that God revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, that Jesus Christ came from the Father, that He gave Him to the world, and that by Him we have grace and truth. In this sense, which, well considered, is not strictly the sense of Professor Harnack, the question whether Jesus rose from the dead cannot exist for him who ignores it, who has never reflected upon the ensemble of His life.

THE END.

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